

# BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2005

ADAM FOREPAUGH'S GREAT SHOW, LARGEST IN THE WORLD.

THE HANDSOMEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD



LALLA ROOKH.

MUSEUM, MENAGERIE, TRIPLE CIRCUS & ROMAN HIPPODROME.



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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2005

FRED D. PFENING, JR.

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Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor

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### THE FRONT COVER

This beautiful 1881 Adam Forepaugh litho featured "The Handsomest Woman in the World Lalla Rookh."

The poster was printed by the Strobridge Lithographing Company, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Image courtesy of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

### THE BACK COVER

The cover of the 1922 Ringling-Barnum courier. The was the second year that wild animal acts were in the performance. The courier was printed by the Strobridge Litho Co.

### CORRECTION

The George Smith article in the July-August *Bandwagon* said the combined Ringling-Barnes train consisted of 68 cars. The actual number was 50.

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I certify the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., publisher. (10-1-05)



# Lalla Rookh

## The Poem, the Pachyderms, and the Pulchritude

By Stuart Thayer

*This paper was presented at the 2005 Circus Historical Society convention.*

In the realm of literature, the eighteenth century was a time of rationalism. This gave way in the early nineteenth century to romanticism, part of which was a concern with things oriental. Emphasizing Near Eastern-Indian customs and modes of expression this period reflected exploration and colonization in India and North Africa. Poets such as Lord Byron wrote of Persian intrigue, desert romance, and Turkish harems. The Romantic writers, most of whom were Englishmen, wanted to extend their culture beyond the borders of England to lands they imagined as

An illustration of Lalla Rookh on Dan Rice in 1859.

mysterious and beautiful. The reality of such places escaped them, much as today's tourist groups visiting Europe by bus claim they've visited France.

Among the romantics was the Irish poet, Thomas Moore (1779-1852), who in 1817 introduced his long poem, *Lalla Rookh*, sub-titled *An Oriental Romance*. This became immensely popular, and went through twenty editions and was widely translated. It was especially favored by young women.

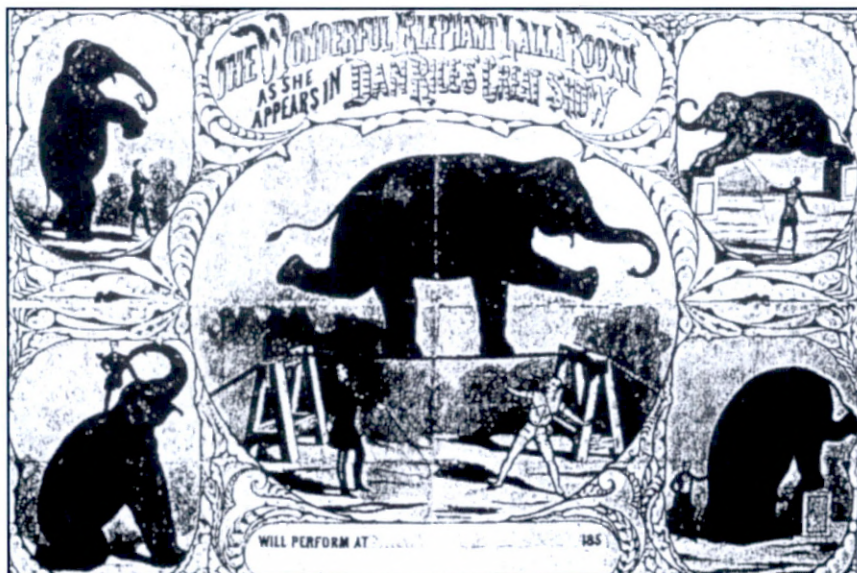
The story, or stories, that composed the poem, to give them a brevity that they did not have themselves (the poem was sixty-eight pages long in a Philadelphia edition), mainly concerned Lalla Rookh, the youngest daughter of the Emperor, traveling from Delhi to Bucharia to marry the king of that country. The train of ser-



An illustration of Lalla Rookh from Moore's book.

vants, guards, and animals that accompanied her stretched for miles, as every need a princess might have was provided for. Included in the party was a young poet who entertained the princess by telling a series of stories which are included in the poem. Lallah had never met her betrothed, and imagine her surprise at the end of the journey, when the young poet disclosed his true identity as her husband to be.

Lalla Rookh meant tulip-cheek in Hindi. The name first appears in the American circus in 1854. However, it was not applied to a woman, but to an elephant. Dan Rice's Hippodrome bought from Franconi's Hippodrome a small, female elephant, said by some to be a dwarf. She had been called Juliet on the Franconi show. She did not perform until she was trained by Charles Noyes, her keeper under Rice. He taught her to walk





the tight-rope. This proved to be an eight-inch hawser at a level of eighteen inches to two feet off the ground. It was an amazing piece of training, considering that the only previous record of such a thing dated to Roman times. She may also have been the first elephant to learn to stand on her head.

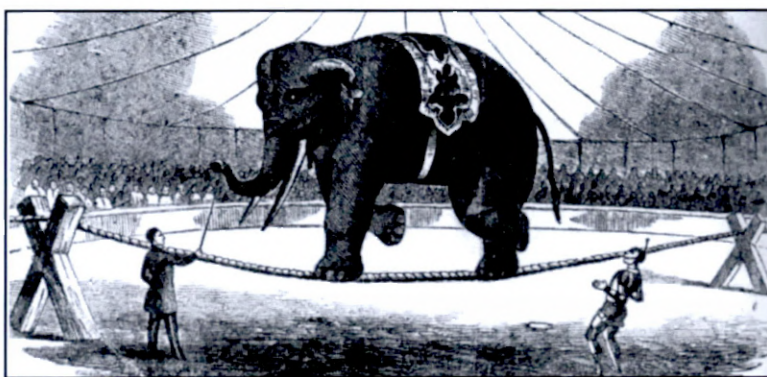
Lalla Rookh was with Rice for seven years. She died in Bloomington, Indiana on 11 September 1860. Her death came about through poisoning, possibly from ingesting some noxious weed.

Stewart Craven, the well-known elephant trainer, returned from Europe in 1866 with several calf elephants. These he sold to various circuses. One went to Thayer & Noyes for 1867, who named her Lalla Rookh. She was only thirty-five inches high, indicating an age of two years. She appeared in the Grand Entree with a child astride her.

Thayer & Noyes dissolved their partnership after the 1868 season, and each partner framed his own show. In the division of assets James L. Thayer received Lalla Rookh, and she graced his circus in 1869. Unfortunately, Thayer & Noyes had neglected their printers.

After Thayer had been on the Orphan Asylum lot in Cincinnati for four days his "Hippozoonmadon" was attached by both Clarry & Reilly of New York, and Russell, Morgan of Cincinnati, which closed the concern. An auction was held on 8 November 1869, and Lalla Rookh became the property of Adam Forepaugh.

The name "Baby Annie" was applied to two different calves in 1869, both possibly from the Craven imports. One of them was on Forepaugh, and the other with Gardner and Kenyon. Adam Forepaugh and his brothers partnered with Gardner and Kenyon for 1870. Forepaugh provided ten cages of animals and two elephants for this new partnership for 12% of the profits. Thus, Forepaugh had Romeo and two calves, and the new show, called Gardner & Forepaugh, had two elephants. Lalla Rookh was



Lalla Rookh on the Dan Rice show.

somewhere in that mix. Each circus continued to advertise "Baby Annie." This may have been done in order to share the cost of lithographs, or to use up paper on hand.

In 1871 Adam Forepaugh's Circus had Romeo and Lalla Rookh. This was the last season in which her name appeared. Forepaugh was a partner in another new circus, Rosston, Springer & Henderson, which had as their Grand Entree a pageant which they advertised as "La'lla Rookh." This is interesting because it was ten years before Adam Forepaugh presented a similar entry.

Charles H. Day proposed the idea of sponsoring a beauty contest, and Forepaugh approved it. In January, 1881, they announced their attempt

An 1882 Forepaugh Lalla Rookh poster. Cincinnati Art Museum.

**LALLA ROOKH'S DEPARTURE FROM DELHI.** THIS MAGNIFICENT ORIENTAL PAGEANT. A FEATURE OF THE FREE STREET PROCESSION OF



**ADAM FOREPAUGH'S CIRCUS & MENAGERIE.**

to find "The Handsomest Woman in America." Day invited ladies who wished to be considered to send him their photographs. The winner was to be awarded \$10,000, and was to appear in the street parade. By 12 March, Day had received 1100 pho-

tos. The vehicle chosen for the exhibition of the winner would be a recreation of "Lalla Rookh's Departure from Delhi," as described in Moore's poem.

This theme was perfect for a circus presentation. It called for elephants, camels, Arabian horses, and dancing girls, all decorated in oriental trappings, and bearing aloft the royal standards. At its head, in a houdah atop a ponderous elephant, was Lalla Rookh, the handsomest woman of all.

When it came to choose the winner, Forepaugh decided that he would keep his \$10,000, and hire someone to be Lalla. Louise Montague (1859-1910), a variety actress, was engaged. As Day described her, "she was accustomed to wearing tights, had a good figure, and made up attractively." Day offered her \$75 a week, but she wanted \$125. Forepaugh awarded her \$100, as he





Louise Montague.

felt he would make up the difference by selling photographs of her.

The scheme was a press agent's

The 1889 Adam Forepaugh litho. Image courtesy of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

delight. The newspapers treated the whole episode as news, and so provided reams of free publicity. Day promised Forepaugh a mile of press, and he got it. "The streets in every large city were packed to see the \$10,000 siren," wrote Day. "The receipts of that week in Chicago were the largest of any circus during the same time in America, and people were turned away from every performance." Montague appeared in the parade and in the Grand Entree, but did not perform in the ring.

Forepaugh was very pleased. He cleared \$240,000 (about \$4,600,000 today) in 1881, and \$260,000 (about \$4,970,000 today) in 1882, and he credited "Lallah Rookh" with making those figures

possible. Montague left the show in July, 1883, but not before bringing suit against Forepaugh for the \$10,000 she didn't receive. The court ruled against her when she could not provide a witness to the promise. She continued her stage career into the 1890s.

A sidebar to the use of Moore's poem was the printing of a lithograph by the Forepaugh show, the purpose of which mystifies us. The villain of one of the stories in Moore's epic is one Mokanna, known as "The Veiled Prophet." He is so disfigured that he wears a veil of silver threads to hide his face. When he removes the mask in front of a woman he wants to be his



A 1915 Barnum & Bailey Lalla Rookh lithograph. Cincinnati Art Museum.

wife, she faints at the sight of him. He is the leader of an Arabic sect, the members of which he poisons at a banquet, after which he kills himself. This sanguineous person was used as the subject of the 1889 lithograph, with Adam Forepaugh portrayed as "The Veiled Prophet." It shows him driving a three-horse chariot pursued by other vehicles labeled Barnum, W. W. Cole, and Miles Orton. We can only conclude that whoever concocted the piece had not read the poem very thoroughly. We have to assume that Forepaugh approved its use, and would guess that since it presented him as leading the pack, it passed muster.

The final bit of life for "Lalla Rookh" in the circus occurred in 1915, when Barnum & Bailey based their Grand Entree on the wedding procession.

Thus it was that for a hundred years Thomas Moore's title was not only memorized by schoolboys, but was before the public in the popular culture. He may not have approved of its use in the circus, had he known of it, but he died in 1852, just a year before Dan Rice renamed the first elephant to be called "Lalla Rookh."





# The Ups and Downs of George Washington Smith

## PART TWO

By Robert J. Loeffler

Judge Shea found all officials guilty and fined the circus \$10,000. The men were sentenced on February 21, 1945. Haley was given from one to five years in prison; Smith and Aylesworth, two to five years; Blanchfield, six months; Versteeg, William Caley and Samuel Clark, each one year. The latter two served their terms in the Hartford County Jail. Judge Shea also granted a stay of execution of sentencing until April 6, 1945 so the convicted could get the circus ready for the road. They were released "on their own cognizance."

State's Attorney H. M. Alcorn, Jr., a former governor of Connecticut, called John Ringling North to the stand. North was a member of the corporation's board of directors, and was the chief prosecution witness. North testified that none of the accused was indispensable. Under direct examination, North didn't have kind words for Smith and the others. He related that he knew one man, Arthur Concello, who was capable of replacing Smith as the show's general manager. North told the court that he had promoted Smith to circus manager in 1938 and he discharged him in 1942, but Smith was rehired when Robert Ringling, Aubrey Ringling, Edith Ringling, and William Dunn, Jr., gained control of the circus. North, when asked if he wanted to see the five men go to prison, replied, "I do not. I am sorry for their difficulties." North testified further that he and Concello could handle Smith's job, and he again named others he could count on in a pinch. North said he didn't know if the former manager would like to take Smith's job.

In the same breath, North said that he agreed that the five accused men were highly skilled in their jobs, and he wanted the circus to continue in operation.

Judge Shea heard motions for suspended sentences or permission to go on trial on April 6, 1945, but after a long session, the court recessed until 10 A. M. on April 7th. At stake was whether or not the five circus officials would be imprisoned on involuntary manslaughter charges. Twice during the hearing, Shea interrupted the proceedings to extend the stay of execution of the jail sentences of the men which were due to expire at noon on the 7th. One extension was until 5 P. M., and the second until 1

James A. Haley, vice-president of Ringling-Barnum. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.



P. M. the next day. The defense lawyer asked Shea for suspension of all sentences or allow them to withdraw the pleas of *nolo contendere* and go to trial. Judge Shea replied that adjustments in some of the cases appeared advisable and made charges in the minimum terms of three of the convicted men so that it would be possible for them to obtain their release from the state prison after they had served between eight and ten months. He changed the prison term imposed on Haley, Smith, and Aylesworth to a minimum of one year and a day, and a maximum of five years. On February 21st he sentenced Haley to serve from one to five years and Smith and Aylesworth to serve from two to seven years. Had Haley's term remained at a minimum of one year, he would have been required to serve all of that time before becoming eligible for parole. The Connecticut parole laws did not permit a reduction in the minimum sentence unless that sentence was more than a year. If it was as little as a day longer than a year, time off for good behavior was allowed. The reduction was earned at the rate of five days a month or 60 days a year at Wethersfield prison and 10 days a month or 120 days a year at the prison farm in Enfield. It was the policy of the State Prison Board to transfer men who could be trusted to the prison farm.

If Haley earned all the time off available to him, he could obtain his release in about eight and one-half months. The same benefits applied to Smith and Aylesworth. Judge Shea suspended in its entirety the jail term of David A. Blanchfield of Hartford. He commended Blanch-



field for his frank testimony. Blanchfield had said on the stand that he didn't believe he was indispensable and that the show probably would get along all right without him. "I was impressed with your testimony in this case," Judge Shea told him. "In view of your attitude, I'm impelled to suspend the sentence in your case."

No change was made in the one year sentence imposed on Versteeg, or the six months terms of Caley and Clark. It was pointed out that the court retained control over jail sentences and could make adjustments at any time should this be deemed advisable.

When court reconvened, defense attorney William Hadden moved for a further stay of execution of the sentences of Smith and Aylesworth. State's Attorney Alcorn joined in the motion. "We believe honestly," said Hadden, "that in the present condition of equipment at Sarasota, that without the presence there of Smith and Aylesworth until the circus opening under canvas on June 5-9 at Washington, D. C., such an opening would be impossible. They have charge of reconstruction and designing. That work is going on. For that reason we ask your honor for a stay until June 7."

Hadden indicated that in return for the further extension of time no further motion, petition or move of any character would be made for a sentence reduction and if the two men were given the two months of additional freedom they would return to Sarasota and continue the work of getting the circus on the road again. He emphasized that the very life of the circus depended upon these men to handling their duties in their usual excellent manner.

Haley went to prison immediately in the custody of Sheriff Joseph W. Harding. Versteeg also went to prison, as did Carley and Clark. The latter two spent time in the Hartford County jail in Hartford.

As soon as Smith and Aylesworth reached the winter quarters, they rolled out the canvas, applied all new metal billes, stringers, and jacks. As soon as the big top was erected at winter quarters, the folding chairs were painted.

In early 1945 new flame-resistant

canvas was purchased for the big top and while waiting for its arrival a new seating system was under construction. When all this work was completed, the first sections of the show train departed from Sarasota at 1:20 p.m. on March 22, 1945 for Madison Square Garden.

Robert Ringling, Mrs. Aubrey Ringling, George W. and Mrs. Smith

and others made the trip to prepare for the opening performance at the Garden before the canvas and other equipment arrived. The next stand was Washington, D. C. from June 5 to 9, opening under canvas.

The press reported that: "The two

George Smith's Connecticut prison parole form. Author's collection.

CONNECTICUT STATE PRISON PAROLE DEPARTMENT			
Parole No.	5008	Reg. No.	15258
Date released	2/21/46		
Name	George W. Smith		County
Alias	George Washington Smith		
Age	53	Height	6'
Weight	228	Color	White
Sentenced	April 7, 1945**		Term
Crime		Manslaughter - 10 counts	Exp. Max. Dec. 3, 1949.
Occupation	Circus Manager		Nativity
Civil Condition	Married		Children
Parents living	M-Worcester, Mass.		Religion
Cash at discharge	Conduct		Good
Mental	Above average		Industry
Physical	Good - Overweight		Social
Criminal record	No previous record.		N/R.
Summary of offense A circus fire occurred in Hartford which caused a tragedy. Accused was G/M of show and knew of application of gas and paraffin to tent.			
Employer	Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey		Business
Address	Circus - Sarasota, Florida.		Wages
Transferred to	Business		Wages
Home addresses:	1436 Broadway Ave., Sarasota, Florida P.O. Box 789		
Boarding, renting or buying	No. rooms		Amount
Rooms occupied	Landlord or agent		Address
Brothers or sisters	No brothers. Two sisters. One married sister in Leicester, Mass. One single sister in Worcester, Mass.		
Remarks	**Began June 7, 1945. * 1 yr 1 day to 5 yrs on each count - to run concurrently.		
Date case closed	2-20-47		How
			D. B. P.





key circus officials whose State Prison sentences had been stayed until June 7 to permit them to get the circus on the road this year, surrendered themselves at noon Thursday to Sheriff Joseph N. Harding.

"The two men, George W. Smith, general manager, and Leonard S. Aylesworth, boss canvasman, took the train from Washington late Wednesday night after watching the first public performance under the new big top to a capacity audience." Harding met the men at the depot of the New Haven Railroad in Hartford, and hustled them off to the state prison.

At the time, Smith commented: "The \$60,000 advance ticket sales for four days assured us that the public hasn't lost confidence in the circus. That was just twice the previous receipts. Advance sales at the next stand, Baltimore, stand at \$20,000."

As previously stated, for Smith's replacement, North suggested his old friend, Arthur Concello, previously co-owner of Russell Brothers Great Pan-Pacific Circus or Ralph J. Clauson, general manager of the Clyde Beatty Circus.

He further indicated that William Curtis, boss canvasman of Cole Brothers Circus was qualified to take Aylesworth's place, or one or two of the latter's assistants could take over in the emergency.

The fire was bad enough, but the emotional strain on Smith and the other circus officials, staff, performers, and roustabouts was truly devastating. Few circus employees were able to adequately express their genuine sorrow with what had happened that day in the city of the Charter Oak.

Smith couldn't believe what had happened to him and his fellow staff members.

It was even worse for him when the country learned that the fire was probably caused by a former roustabout with mental problems. Perhaps if Smith and the others had paid more attention to their duties that day, the fire wouldn't have been so devastating. One will never know. George Smith's beloved mother and sisters helped him cope with the reality of July 6 and the prison sentence



Leonard Aylesworth, boss canvasman.

that lay ahead. These three women visited the prison often. The photographs of Smith at the time of his police booking are shocking and bear little resemblance to the man I knew as a young man.

The Wethersfield prison kept a daily "Prison Record Book of Visitors" which reveal that neither John and Henry Ringling North nor Edith Ringling visited Haley and the others, but according to Stewart O'Nan, John North attempted to visit Haley in the warden's office. Haley refused to meet with North, but he later relented. Undoubtedly Smith and Aylesworth were also present. North was playing a clever game because to regain control of the circus, he needed to cultivate, if only superficially, the friendship of Haley, his wife Aubrey, and Edith Ringling who controlled a sizable amount of the voting stock.

An examination of the prison record book contains the names of Smith's many visitors. His wife Marian made 15 visits, his mother and sister Mae 8 times, sister Jane Hixon with her husband Stanley were there 7 times. Visitors from the circus fraternity included David Blanchfield, performance director Pat Valdo, Robert Ringling's secretary Jane Johnson, concessionaire Frank C. Miller, contracting agents

Bill Conway and Al Butler, utility man Bill Reynolds, circus watchman Edward L. Nye, ticket seller L. W. Woodruff, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Reynolds from the front door of the show, circus auditor John Griffin, circus attorney Herbert Duval, performers Winifred and Con Colleano, Worcester, Massachusetts CFA member James Northbridge and his wife, and Mrs. Courtney Riley Cooper, widow of the circus writer. Their visits were very supportive. They visited between November 10, 1945 and February 20, 1946.

There are many other names in the prison record book, but they can't be deciphered because of the penmanship. Sometimes the prison official on duty signed the register rather than the visitor.

On August 31, 1945 Mrs. Charles Ringling wrote to Smith, "My Dear George.

"I wonder if you know how much we all miss you here. Business is good--weather very hot 97 right now.

"I hope you are not letting your loss of freedom get you down too much. It is very terrible of course but try to come through it as well as possible and we all thank God when we see your smiling face here again!"

She wrote Smith again on October 11, "I have just finished a letter for the Board of Pardons. You know nothing was said but the highest praise. I hope it does some good!

"We all miss you so it will be a happy day when you are back. Not just because we need you either, but more because you are such a solid safe person."

During Smith's and the others' incarceration, there were behind the scenes maneuvers, both in Florida and Connecticut, to obtain early paroles for them. In the case of Smith these endeavors proved fruitless until November 4, 1945, when the Connecticut Board of Parole was called into session. The purpose was to consider parole for Haley, Smith, and Aylesworth, but, after a hearing lasting fourteen hours, the Board of Parole voted no action today on the application of Smith and Aylesworth. The decision was tantamount to a rejection as the board, which consisted of former Governor Baldwin and five others.

Haley withdrew his parole plea



soon after the November 4 hearing. No reason was given for Haley's action. The petition was originally filed on September 9, 1945, according to the Clerk of the Parole Board, Common Pleas Judge Vine E. Parmelee of Windsor, Connecticut. Judge Parmelee said that Florida Attorney General J. Tom Watson, had telephoned regarding a hearing for the three men and the Florida official told him he would appear when the petition was heard. It appeared, however, that the three men acted independently of Watson, as their counsel William Hadden said that they knew nothing of the Florida official's activity in the case.

On October 30, 1945, Walter K. Sibley, executive secretary of the National Showman's Association, wrote the parole board at Wethersfield about a Smith pardon. On October 31st Ralph H. Walker, warden of the prison replied to Sibley's letter: "Acknowledging receipt of your letter of October 30, with reference to George Smith, please be advised that he is to appear before the Board of Pardons at their meeting on November 5 [4]. We have come to know these boys from your organization quite well, and we have a very high regard for each one of them. They have accepted this experience with courage and fortitude, looking forward to the day when they can be back with your organization, as I believe they are entitled to every consideration. Your letter will be presented to the Secretary of the Pardon Board when this case appears before them for consideration. Ralph H. Walker, Warden."

Once Smith, Haley and Aylesworth were released from prison, certain parole restrictions were imposed upon them. There was an affable relationship between these men and their parole officers, and one surmises that the correction officials found their anecdotes and stories about life in the circus interesting and intriguing.

Discussion with prison officials and attorneys shed a lot of light on the status of the Ringling-Barnum Circus while the men were imprisoned. James J. McIllduff was

Smith's parole officer, and it was to him Smith had to report on a regular basis.

On March 1, 1946, J. R. Griffin, Ringling's auditor, penned this note to McIllduff, "Dear Mr. McIllduff: "This is to inform you that Mr. George W. Smith reported to the undersigned corporation for duty February 25, and is now employed in his usual position as General Manager of the circus corporation."

Aylesworth and Haley also had to report, either in person or by letter, on a regular basis as to their activities, employer, and whereabouts.

Haley began serving his prison term immediately after the April 7, 1945 hearing. He was escorted to prison by Hartford County sheriff, Joseph H. Harding. Joe Bradbury wrote: "Not heavily publicized in either the national press [or] the trade press was the release from prison of James A. Haley on Christmas Eve 1945." Haley was not met at the prison by anyone but he immediately left by train for winter quarters at Sarasota, Florida. Robert Ringling was still president; Haley, vice-president; Mrs. Edith (Charles) Ringling, vice-president; Aubrey Ringling, vice-president; and George W. Smith, general manager.

Bradbury wrote the following about Haley and Robert Ringling: "Tradition has long held that Haley, as a result of his conviction, was extremely bitter toward Robert Ringling who escaped all criminal

Pat Valdo, Robert Ringling and George Smith.

prosecution and felt he had unfairly taken the rap for responsibility of the fire when actually he was no more guilty than Ringling himself. In any event [in 1946] Haley began moving rapidly behind the scenes to remove Robert Ringling from his chief executive's seat and take control of the circus for himself. Allied in this effort was John Ringling North. With the 37 percent of the stock controlled by North (seven percent personally owned plus 30 percent owned by the late John Ringling's estate of which he was executor) plus the 31 1/2 percent owned by his wife, the former Aubrey Ringling, Haley could accomplish this. Mrs. Charles Ringling, Robert's mother, owned the remaining 31 1/2 percent of stock."

It is possible that privately Smith shared Haley's feelings toward Robert Ringling, although publicly he gave no clue that this was the case.

Seatman Carley served his time in the Hartford jail. He was released from jail on September 6, 1946 by order of Superior Court Justice Shea. His sentence began on February 24, 1945, and he was described as a model prisoner and cooperative.

Smith and Leonard R. Aylesworth entered the State Prison on June 7, 1945. Both were cooperative and understanding of the situation in which they found themselves.

They were not treated as criminals. Warden Ralph H. Walker in early inquiries declined to disclose the exact date that Smith (and Aylesworth) would be paroled but many speculated it would be on

either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, 1945. Both men had earned their one-half month's commutation for good behavior. It is interesting that the press at the time reported Smith's home as being at Worcester, Massachusetts, in spite of the fact that in sworn testimony he had given Sarasota as his present home. He hadn't resided in Worcester for several years.

The state Parole Board voted to release





Smith and Aylesworth on February 25, 1946, but advanced the date four days to February 21, 1946. Neither the New York Times nor the Worcester *Evening Gazette* made mention of the event.

Smith's wife Marian, his mother and sister May met George at the gate of the Enfield Prison Farm on February 21st. Smith and Aylesworth hurried off to Hartford's Union Station to board the next Pullman train for New York and sunny Florida. George's mother and sister returned to Worcester on the next eastbound train.

The State of Connecticut retains all inmate master files for 25 years, but in Smith's case "his file is among records that were not destroyed and are held for archival purposes at the State Library, Hartford," wrote a prison official to me. Smith's inmate number was 52580.

Smith resumed his position as general manager in 1946. Beverly Kelly, Press and Radio Department Director, wrote the following remarks for circus management in 1945: "Those who proved that they were troupers in 1945 did so not for the circus alone, but also for our men at Hartford. The tragedy of theirs in caricature there has served as a challenge and a symbol throughout the tour. Ed F. Kelly, Mrs. Haley and all others who were called upon to replace these absent members of the circus family, deserve special credit for faithful performance in as precarious a season as ever confronted the Big One. Ed Kelly, assistant general manager, and his assistant, Lloyd Morgan, and the department bosses took the physical show that George Smith, Leonard Aylesworth and others had put together and they made it click. Robert Ringling and his production staff fashioned a matchless performance."

William Clew in the Hartford (Connecticut) *Courant* of February 17, 1945 wrote an article entitled "Circus Officials' Trial Continued to Tuesday, Plead Nolo Contendere." It read in part: "This case has been investigated and reinvestigated by one agency after another and by the defense as well," Mr.

Alcorn said in conclusion. He remarked especially about the inquiry of State Police Commissioner Edward J. Hickey as state fire marshal and that of Coroner France E. Healy, which had enabled the State to obtain a complete picture of what happened. "There is one very wholesome thing about this case and that is the attitude of the accused," Mr. Alcorn asserted. "I don't know of another criminal case in my experience in which the State has encountered such a wholesome attitude. I personally questioned some of them at the circus grounds soon after the fire and from that day to this there has never been any position on the part of any of them to evade the penalty. They seem to feel sincere regret over what happened. Their attitude is not exactly a willingness to pay a penalty, but a resignation to answer for criminal acts."

Others echoed similar feelings about the circus officials who spent time in a Connecticut prison. Many people in Connecticut were very impressed with the manner in which the circus conducted itself during the trial and its genuineness in pledging

George Smith and assistant manager Ed Kelly.



financial aid to all fire victims, with all claims paid. This demonstrated a strong moral fiber by those in charge.

The Board of Directors of the Ringling Brothers Circus (Robert Ringling, Aubrey Ringling Haley, Mrs. Edith Ringling, William P. Dunn, Jr., James Edgar, John North and Major George D. Woods) offered and adopted the following resolution concerning the fire and the men who went to prison. It is obvious from the tone of the resolution that these men and women were genuinely concerned about what had taken place:

"WHEREAS the First Vice President, the General Manager and four other members of the Circus personnel, following pleas of nolo contendere, were sentenced for involuntary man-slaughter in connection with the fire on July 6, 1944, at Hartford, Connecticut, and

"WHEREAS such pleas of nolo contendere were entered by them unselfishly and for the benefit of the Circus corporation, notwithstanding their and our sincere belief in their complete innocence, and

"WHEREAS had such pleas not been entered there would undoubtedly have been a long trial during the winter season and during the period of the opening of the Madison Square

Garden engagement, at which time such a trial would have been exceedingly damaging to the Circus and might have prevented the preparation and presentation of the new performance, a result which would have seriously jeopardized the very existence of this corporation and prevented fulfillment of the plan for compensation to the victims of the fire,

"RESOLVED that the directors personally and on behalf of the corporation express grateful appreciation and acknowledge extreme obligation to those men for the personal sacrifice that they have made to the great benefit and to the lasting advantage of the Circus corporation.

"FURTHER RESOLVED that the directors endorse and adopt the sentiment



expressed in an editorial appearing in the Hartford Times, on April 9, 1945, as follows: They are in a sense the victims of circumstances, and they may be sure that they will be so regarded. No stigma will attach to their names as a result of their actions.

"FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be spread on the records of the corporation, that it be published to all employees."

The circus, in 1945, netted about one million dollars, the best season in history. The record would have been even better if Smith and Aylesworth had been a part of the season because many performances were missed due to delays in dismantling and setting up by less experienced men.

During the 1938 Ringling Circus strike and the disastrous 1944 Hartford fire as far as is known, nothing appeared in the press about Smith's alcohol addiction. Even in the testimony before the coroner, the matter never came up. Neither is it mentioned in his physical examination nor mental evaluation before, during, and after spending time in prison. His physical examination at the Connecticut prison reveals that he was overweight, smoked too many cigars, and his teeth needed attention, but his mental evaluation does not indicate an alcohol problem. Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Corrections of the State of Connecticut, Jack Tokaiz, stated that there are no records on how alcoholics were treated in the 1940s in Connecticut prisons. However, knowledgeable people who had loved ones incarcerated say that "a prisoner can obtain whatever he needs while being locked up," meaning that Smith may well have been able to obtain alcohol while in prison.

A few days after the circus fire, an incident occurred that suggests key Hartford police and state investigators knew of Smith's problem. State Trooper Francis Whelen visited the bar in the Hotel Bond because people who are normally tight-lipped often become quite talkative after a few drinks. He learned that Smith was at



Mrs. Aubrey Ringling Haley and George Smith.

the bar on the evening of July 8, 1944, so he dropped around to test the water. Stuart O'Nan wrote: "He [Whelen] had been nursing his drinks in the bar at the Bond Hotel, under cover, hoping to pick up information on the fire from the show people staying there. Another detective was going to be in this bar-room at the same time, but they were not to recognize each other.

"Whelen struck up a conversation with George W. Smith, who was steamed by a *Times* article about the city firemen who tried to direct water on the tent only to be pushed away by Blanchfield's men. Smith commented that Hartford was one of the few cities this size that didn't station a piece of fire fighting equipment right on the lot. He had a date to keep and left Whelen at the rail."

Prior to Aylesworth's release it was learned that he suffered from a brief appen-

dicitis attack, and it ruptured by the time he arrived in Sarasota. He was rushed to the hospital, had his appendix removed, and was back at his old job several weeks later.

Edward R. Versteeg, superintendent of the light department, upon release from prison on February 21, 1946, returned to winter quarters. Ward Nath was acting superintendent during Versteeg's absence. Versteeg didn't go on the road again until 1948.

James Haley returned as circus president in 1946-47, and George Smith was general manager. Aylesworth was superintendent of canvas in 1946-47 (in 1948 Bill Curtis replaced him). David Blandfield did not return as wagon and truck superintendent until 1948. In 1946 Stanley Wacht was superintendent.

While in prison and as soon as he was paroled, Haley moved swiftly to oust Robert Ringling as president and take control of the giant circus for himself. He had several allies including John Ringling North (with 37% of the stock) in addition to the 31 1/2% controlled by

Robert Ringling, president of the Greatest Show on Earth.





Aubrey Ringling and Edith Ringling. The deed was done at the April 1946 board meeting.

It seems as though everyone had to swing with the punches. Smith's position was safe as long as Haley was in command, but by 1948 Smith and Haley were out of the Ringling picture. Haley went on to a career serving Florida in the U. S. House of Representatives. Smith, as we shall see, returned to the life of the circus.

In early 1947, the Hartford County Bar Association approved plans for the Ringling-Barnum Circus to purchase a number of war surplus railroad hospital cars from the U.S. government (under the receivership terms the bar committee had to approve any large or new equipment purchases by the show). Thirty cars were acquired and remodeled into sleepers, advertising cars, etc. It had been reported to the committee that the circus was badly in need of new rolling stock. A plan was worked out so that the show would be able to lease with the full rental charge being credited against the purchase of the cars later. Some of the cars were ready to roll by the time the 1947 tenting season began.

The 1947 season, with Smith still the active general manager, opened at Madison Square Garden on April 9 through May 11. This was Easter vacation time for New York school children, and they and their parents flocked to the circus.

On February 7, 1947, Smith finally received his discharge from the Connecticut Parole Board which sent him the following letter: "Mr. Duval has probably already informed you that you recent request for a final discharge was granted by our Board of Parole at their last meeting.

"You will be completely released from this institution on February 20th. An official notice of your discharge will be sent to you at that time.

"Both Mr. Cummings and I appreciate no end the courtesy and attention shown us on our recent trip to Sarasota. We hope some time to be able to reciprocate in any way possible.

"Please convey my regards to Mr. Haley and all our other friends. Best of luck and every happiness to you all.

"Sincerely yours, James J. McIlhuff, Parole Agent."

The Warden wrote Smith on February 20, 1947, "It is with great deal of pleasure that we notify you of your final discharge and release from further parole supervision as of this date, February 20, 1947. Best wishes for a pleasant and successful future."

Smith was out as circus general manager at the end of 1947 and in 1948 Arthur M. Concello was the general manager. He provided North with financial aid when North was trying to regain control of the circus. Smith's departure largely went

and Barnum & Bailey, this week was named manager of Dailey Bros., and joined the show at Shelby, Montana on the 26th.

"Announcement of Smith's appointment was made by R. M. Harvey, Dailey general agent, who issued the following statement, 'I am pleased to announce that Mrs. Ben Davenport, at my urging, has hired George Smith as manager of the Dailey show. In my opinion Smith is one of the best men in the circus business and we are fortunate to secure his services. When I heard that Smith, who has been off the road and living in Sarasota, Florida, since leaving the Ringling show, was available. I immediately wired Mrs. Davenport, urging her to hire him.

Within a matter of a few hours, Mrs. Davenport called me long distance and told me she had hired Smith and that he would report to the show in Shelby.'

"Harvey, when asked just what Smith's job as manager would be, said he would be in direct charge of the show proper.

"Of course, Mrs. Davenport as treasurer of the show, handles all financial matters and is the top boss of the show,' Harvey said. 'Smith will be able to take over a lot of the duties Mrs. Davenport has been handling since her husband's illness.'

"Regarding Ben Davenport, who is a patient in Colonial Hospital, Rochester, Minnesota, where he is under the care of Mayo Clinic doctors, Harvey said the Dailey owner's condition is critical. He said he visited Davenport last week and found him to be 'a very sick man.' He said a wire Friday informed him (Harvey) that for the first time in three weeks Davenport had shown a slight improvement Thursday. 'Mrs. Davenport is in constant touch with the hospital by telephone' Harvey said, 'and I plan to go to Rochester next week to visit him again and may stay there until he is safely out of the woods.'

"The Dailey general agent said attending physicians refuse to make



Harry Hammill, half owner of Dailey Bros. Circus, George Smith and Ben Davenport in 1949.

unnoticed in the regular press, but *Billboard* carried the story.

George Smith's career wasn't over. Dailey Brothers' Circus (1940-1950) hired him as general manager during the 1948 season. This was the only gift show with which he was ever associated.

The September 4, 1948 *Billboard* told the story: "August 28. George W. Smith, former superintendent and general manager of Ringling Bros.



any prediction as to the outcome of his case, which, they said is the severest type of typhoid fever."

Smith was listed in the 1948 route book as business manager; Ben Davenport held the official title of manager.

Beverly Kelley was in charge of the press department. Former Ringling-Barnum pressmen Allan Lester and Frank Morrissey were with the show. Veteran bill car manager Bill Oliver, another Ringling-Barnum veteran, managed the advance advertising car.

Louis Reed was menagerie boss. Rex Williams and Robert "Smokey" Jones were elephant hands.

Jones years later spoke very highly of Smith. He said Smith revised the loading order of the train and installed hitches on the rear of all wagons, allowing two or more to be pulled to and from the train. This cut the time and labor necessary to get the vehicles to the lot. He recalled that Smith immediately impressed the Dailey personnel as a smart and knowledgeable circus manager.

George Smith remained with the Dailey show through its last season of 1950.

In January 1951, Clyde Beatty announced he was reorganizing his circus. In early February *Billboard* reported, "Shreveport, Louisiana. Feb. 3. George W. Smith had been named general manager of the Clyde Beatty Circus and that Leonard Aylesworth had been signed as general superintendent. The appointments followed a statement made several weeks ago by Clyde Beatty that an extensive revamping of his staff was in the making.

"Both men come to the Beatty show with long experience on Ringling-Barnum and other circuses.

"Smith managed Dailey Bros. Circus in 1948, 1949 and 1950 and was general manager of the Ringling show for many years. During World War II he was loaned by Ringling to the Army to frame a major war show."

Smith returned as manager of the Beatty show in 1952. On January 29, 1952 Beatty wrote Smith, "Your



George and Marian Smith on the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1951.

guarantee [in 1952] will be 2% of the net profits, with a minimum guarantee of \$5,000 for the season starting on March 1 and ending when the show is put away in winter quarters. The drawing account against this account will be a sum satisfactory to you. There will be no personal expense account.

"Jane is writing this personally for me so no one knows about our agreement except you and I, and I will keep a copy of this letter for my file."

Payroll receipts for the 1952 season show that Smith's draw was \$75 a week, about \$533 today.

After leaving Beatty, Smith became associated with a non-show organization in Sarasota, but he continued to have a keen interest in what was happening in the world of the circus.

He returned to the Ringling-Barnum fold in the spring of 1956. Michael Burke, executive director of the circus, confirmed that Smith's new position would put him in charge of all contracting operations and Smith would hire other personnel to work in the department. Smith's new assignment was formerly part of general agent Paul Eagles' chores. Eagles was placed in charge

of transporting the circus with Smith doing the contracting part. Routing policies and details were still set by Burke and John Ringling North but Smith and Eagles were consulted. "Smith's return to the show apparently marks the end of difficulties between him, Smith, and North which have existed for some time," noted the March 24, 1956 *Billboard*.

Eagles, in February 1955, took F. A. (Babe) Boudinot's job as general agent who was stationed in the Chicago office, along with Nat Green. As general agent Smith received \$250 a week.

Paul Eagles resigned as general agent of Ringling-Barnum during the week of May 9, 1956, and Smith accepted the post as general

agent. Actually, Eagles closed with the show in Chicago and left for home in Los Angeles. Both Eagles and Smith worked together for a couple of weeks in order to insure a smooth transition.

Floyd King, one-time owner of King Brothers Circus, joined the advance staff of the Ringling Circus in late May 1956. His new duties, as special agent, were under Smith's direction. King had been invited to join the Ringling circus earlier but because he was still active in his own show, decided not to accept the offer.

Little is known of Smith's life after his last stint with the big show. His wife Marian became a legal secretary and the Smiths lived in a nice area of Sarasota. It was rumored that he had received money from Mrs. Charles Ringling for taking the fall for her son Robert. George Washington Smith, in spite of his rough and tumble life and rough and tumble life style, somehow managed to live to age 93, longer than any of his peers. He passed away at the Manor Care Center of Sarasota on August 2, 1986.

This article was edited and augmented by Fred D. Pfening, Jr. and Fred D. Pfening III. Some information came from the George W. Smith Papers in the Pfening Archives.



# How can we help you?

By Rev. George "Jerry" Hogan  
National Circus Director

*This paper was presented at the 2005 Circus Historical Society convention.*

Cardinal Hamao, Archbishop Marchetto and participates in the VII International Congress of the Pastoral Care for Circus and Traveling Show People. I'm privileged to reflect with you on the theme of hospitality of the Church in the United States toward the circus and traveling show people.

Since 1992 our Circus and Traveling Show Ministry organization has met annually in January at St. Martha's Church, Sarasota, Florida. We gather to reflect on our work, focus on the needs of our people and gather in celebration with our annual Circus Mass. Over the years this Mass has become a tradition and symbol to our people. They feel a sense of welcome by St. Martha's pastor, Fr. Fausto Starnpiglia, SAC, who always greets them with his unique style of love and compassion. His tone has catapulted a positive response to the entire circus community and thus enhanced our ministry.

Hospitality is the key to our ministry whether the circus, carnival, (American term for traveling shows) or our motor sports, (CART, Indy Cars, NASCAR, or Formula One). Reverend John Vakulskas has served the carnival people since 1969. He is a priest of the Diocese of Sioux City and

full time pastor of St. Mary Parish in Alton, Iowa. Reverend Philip DeRea, MSC is National Auto Racing Chaplain. He is a Missionary of the Sacred Heart who has just become pastor of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Rome, Italy. I have served eleven years part-time, as National Circus Chaplain and as a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston serving part-

Father Jerry Hogan conducting a Mass at the 2005 Circus Historical Society convention. Ed Limbach photo.

time as associate pastor of St. Michael Parish in North Andover, Massachusetts.

How we approach hospitality relies on our mission set forth by the Lord if we believe that "whenever two or three are gathered in my name." We encounter our people with the Lord's words inside our hearts. We carry the Lord with us knowing that we are all created in his image. The ministry of the moment can have many different twists and turns from hearing a confession behind a lions cage, blessing a carousel, to leading 50,000 people in prayer at the start of a Grand Prix auto race.

I feel the key element in our hospitality especially in our ministry of the moment is the character of the minister. Our people look for open honest ministers of integrity with no hidden agendas, no egos, willing to talk about their lives their struggles and joys in an atmosphere of confidentiality.

This hospitality becomes an encounter. "Lord when did we see you." We succeed when we are open to the Lord's grace in the moment. The ministry of hospitality is a call to affirming our people. First through the sacramental life of the Church Baptism, First Penance and communion, confirmation, marriage, and even funerals are opportunities for expressions of welcome by our liturgical presences and kindness. We also par-







Jon Weiss and Father Jerry on Ringling-Barnum Blue. Paul Gutheil photo.

ticipate in special events in the community such as birthdays, anniversaries, the opening of a season, special blessings for animals, rides, race cars, etc. All affirm our people and give them a sense that they belong in God's church.

One of the challenges confronting our ministry is the constant harassment of our people. They become stereotyped because of their lifestyle of always traveling. Misunderstanding and fear play an important role in the formation of people's attitude toward our people.

For example, we have an organization in the United States, and I think they are also in Europe called PeTA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, this organization has targeted circuses. They feel that all animals are abused by circus people. They want to remove all animals from performing in circuses. Their perception is that circus people are evil; they mistreat their animals for financial gain. Anytime you try to introduce them to a circus or invite them into the backyard to see the

animals, they will not venture in because they might have to change their attitude. I know there are other examples with our carnival and motor sports people.

Our call to hospitality must be a call to break down these attitudes, first by always educating why and how our people live this specific lifestyle. Anytime we have an opportunity to be interviewed in the media we should explain the church position in regard to our people.

In his audience of December 3, 1981, Pope John Paul II defined the work of show people as a "Healthy, relaxing, and intelligent diversion." The Church and Traveling Show Apostolate refers to the ministry of the church in the world of show people who create festive occasions for all Americans to enjoy.

The technology of our world has forced our pastoral outreach to change greatly since our last gathering. The computer, cell phone, fax have linked us to one another and our people.

The death of Dessi Espana on May 22, 2004 in St. Paul, Minnesota is a clear example. An hour after Dessi's fall, messages were coming in from all over the United States and Bulgaria. We are now connected within minutes. This changes the way we approach our ministry.

Our outreach now depends upon the information highway. We must learn to develop all phrases of the internet from web pages to e-mail to spread our ministry.

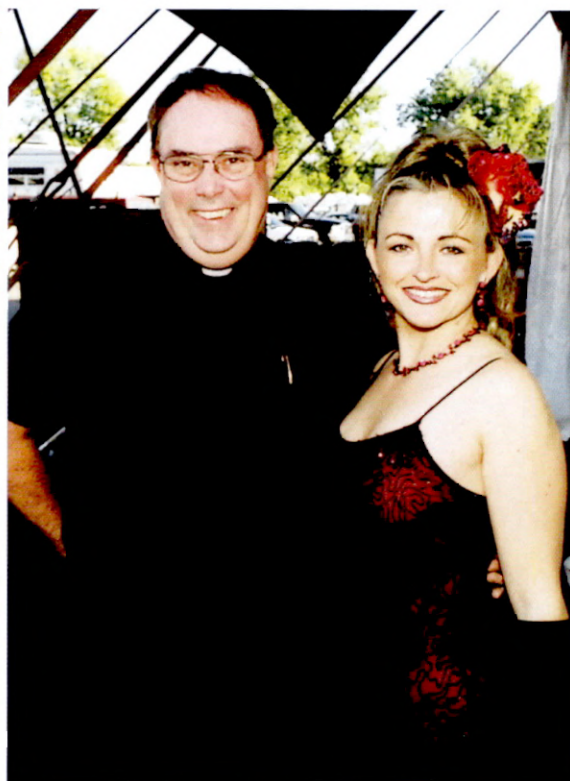
Here in the United States our Circus

Ministry networks with our carnival and motor sports community. As I mentioned, we meet annually in Sarasota. In August of 2003 we gathered in St. Cloud, Minnesota and met with Bishop John R. Kinney, designated our Episcopal Liaison with the United States Catholic Conference. We shared ideas and help to affirm one another.

We also network with the Episcopal Church of the United States. Rev. David J. Tetrault is an integral force, ministering with us on the three Ringling shows and lending his pastoral experience at our annual Sarasota gathering.

Our network includes a number of priests throughout the United States who love circus and are willing to offer the sacraments. Four religious women two on the Carson & Barnes Circus out of Hugo, Oklahoma and for the first time in 134 years two on the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus Blue Unit, minister to circus people. The presences of these women affirm our theme of hospitality. In many ways they are the foundation of our work. They have opened up many doors by their

Father Jerry with Nellie Hanneford. Paul Gutheil photo.





presence working with our people.

Our Ministry is blessed by a strong lay organization of people willing to help set the tone of hospitality by giving of themselves in many unique ways. A number of our lay volunteers are from other religious traditions.

Our coordinator, Sister Charlotte Hobelman, SND, works out of the United States Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C., within the Migrant Ministries section of the people on the move division of PCMR. Sister sets the tone for hospitality by gathering us annually in Sarasota, Florida and helping us to identify areas of need. Two important areas we are trying to address are education and literacy, and retirement and elder care.

We have two lay volunteers, Art and Beth Ramos, who have retired to Florida, purchased a house trailer and this past summer visited many circuses throughout the United States evaluating the education on the shows. They will present a report at our next meeting in January.

We have also formed a Circus and Traveling Show Retirement Project, Inc. The purpose of this organization is to determine the needs of traveling show people, to determine the methods to address these needs and to plan for implementation of an appropriate response.

We hope to eventually buy land in the Sarasota area, calling it the apostrophe "The Winter Quarters." We plan to build a few buildings for meetings and have electricity and water hook ups for trailers. This is our dream. Of course we need prayers and some wealthy supporters to make it a reality.

There are a number of organizations that support the circus people, such as the Circus Fans Association, and the Circus Historical Society. I am a member of both organizations and they have helped us assist our people.

Two important institutions in the American circus are the Circus World Museum in



A baptism at St. Martha's Church in January 2005. Fred Pfening photo.

Baraboo, Wisconsin, where the Ringling Brothers Circus began and wintered for many years, and the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida a combination art and circus museum which is expanding its circus collection with a new building called the Howard Tibbals Learning

Father Hogan publishes *Troubadour* magazine four times a year.



Center. Mr. Tibbals has the largest model circus in the world. It will fill ten thousand square foot room. This permanent exhibition will open in January of 2006. Both museums have been important resources and support to our ministry. Their spirit of hospitality has enabled us to reach important documents about families and help keep their family tradition alive.

The circus the industry is ever-changing and reinventing itself. The world has experienced a different type of circus from Canada called Cirque du Soleil. It is a very important player in the circus world. Here in the United States, I have had occasional contact with this organization through performers who had worked on previous shows. I have celebrated a few weddings on Soleil but never been afforded the opportunity to have direct access to the backyard.

Fortunately this past summer in Boston Cirque Du Soleil's show "Varekai" played six weeks. Their general manager had previously worked for Ringling Brothers and allowed me access. I was slowly able to develop a sense of trust and hospitality by being there. The seed has been planted.

The corner stone of our ministry will always be the local Church and its response to the circus and traveling show people. We can educate and assist in breaking down barriers of prejudice but God's people must be led by the local church. The ordinary Bishop could designate a person to assist when a circus or a traveling show plays his diocese. Coordinating priests could celebrate the sacraments or help our people with specific needs such as finding merchants who will help people and not take advantage of their situation.

Mobility presents problems. The spirit of hospitality starts with the simple words: "How can I help you" which begins the process of welcome and a sense that they have met God in our presence.



# The Romance of Ranch Life

By Fred D. Pfening

*Taking Horace Greeley's advice, my grandfather, then twenty years old, set off from Wellston, Ohio in 1907 to seek fame and fortune in the West, working a number of different jobs in many states. Among his employers were the Miller brothers of the 101 Ranch where he worked for a short period in June 1908. Soon after, he sent this article to the Wellston Telegraph, the home-town newspaper, recounting his experiences there.*

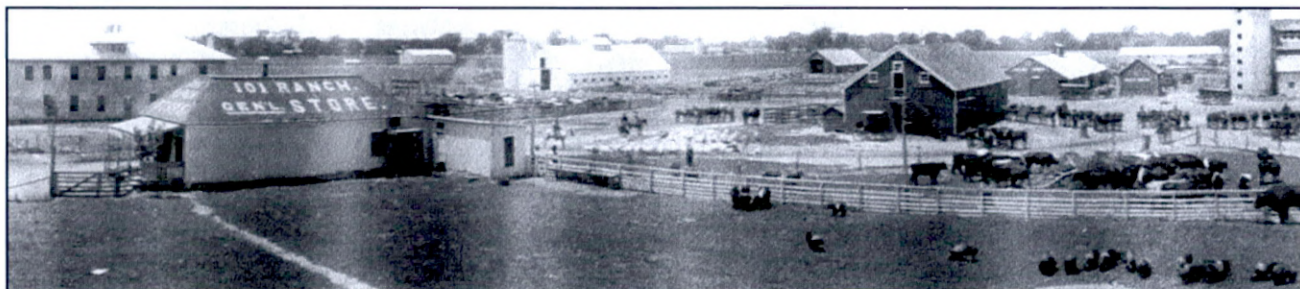
*November of that year. The couple then returned to Ohio where my grandfather eventually bought a retail bakery, then at age 31 founded a company that manufactured equipment for bakeries. The rest of his life was spent in the more mundane, albeit more remunerative, world of business. To my everlasting regret, I never talked to him about his adventures on the 101 Ranch, and amazingly my dad tells me he didn't either,*

*And a bawlin' of calves that don't want but must,*

*And a rattle and battle 'mongst long horned cattle,*

*And that is the heart of the round up.*

*That is certainly the real heart of the ever interesting round up on the real ranch, in fact it is the heart of the whole thing—men, work and all that goes to make up the typical plainsman.*



*Published in the July 15, 1908 edition, his account conveys the rough-and-tumble life of the men who labored for the Miller brothers on their titanic ranch and their Wild West show. He remained in the West through 1909, marrying my grandmother in Newhouse, Utah in*

Fred D. Pfening, Sr. 1887-1963.



A panoramic view of the 101 Ranch.

*but the knowledge that Grandpa had once been a cowboy there was part of our family folklore. He kept his chaps, spurs and pistol from those days in his suburban garage until he died in 1963, so the experience must have had meaning to him. My dad still has the gun, now a rusty relic, and at least one of the spurs is in my parents' attic; otherwise, only two postcards, a few letters and a faded, flaking newspaper article are all that remain of my grandfather's short sojourn as a cowboy on the 101 Ranch. Fred D. Pfening III*

*Come strap on your chaps and your big spurs too,*

*And wrangle your horses as soon as you're through;*

*Better catch up a dozen for one won't do,*

*For we're startin' today for the round up.*

*A cavortin' and snortin' of horses gone wrong,*

*With hailstorm of cuss words, a sprinkle of song,*

*After coming as far west as Kansas, myself and friend W. S. Kalbough heard so much of the much talked of 101 Ranch in Oklahoma we forthwith made preparations to go roughing it for a while, at least until we had seen all. We accordingly left Kansas and came to Oklahoma City,*

George L. Miller.





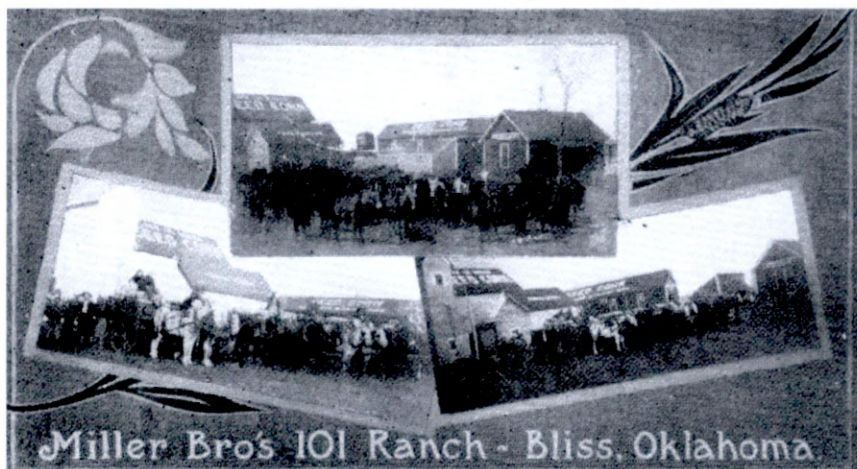


The colorful letterhead used by the 101 Ranch.

the largest and fastest growing city in the Southwest. We spent one week there, and found the busy, hustling people more than interesting. The 101 Ranch is 85 miles north of Oklahoma City.

But let me start at the beginning and tell of our one week stay. We left Oklahoma City on June 24 and arrived at Bliss, which is located on the ranch. The first thing I saw was a cowboy leaning against his horse at the station. He introduced himself to us and we found he was from Pennsylvania. The next thing on the programme for us was to get to the ranch headquarters, four miles from the station. Accordingly, we piled our baggage into an old time, bullet-riddled stage coach which had seen service when the Indians were bad. It was a novel ride; you have probably seen the type in the wild west shows, four horses or mules, drivers perched on the box with a big whip.

A postcard issued by the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch.



After arriving, we went straight to the office where we met Mr. George L. Miller, the youngest of the Miller boys who own "101." I had written him before and he soon knew what we wanted and promised we could go through the work, rough it and see just how things were.

We got to the house just about noon and maybe we were not hungry! So we went to the Ranch "dining hall" which is a very high sounding name for so simple an affair, for it consists of a long, low narrow building, boarded up and down. It was painted red with white trimmings as all the buildings are, except the Miller home and it is solid white. On the inside we found two long tables with equally long benches along the sides. The tables were covered with oil cloth, the floor bare and the smell of cooking prevailed. Each man had a granite plate, cup and saucer,

knife, fork and spoon, in fact, everything on the table was of granite. Steaming pans of beans, corn, potatoes, roast beef, white bread and corn bread composed the menu. You can drink either coffee, milk or water. The cooking is good, and always well done and plenty of it—if you get there in time. The milk

is good unless it has soured and the coffee is also good if it's not so strong that a smell satisfies the appetite. I saw more flies in ten minutes here than any other place in an hour—the most independent flies I ever did see. Three at a time will set on a spoon and dare the eater to take a bite. It is second nature with some of the men



Pfening on horse back at age 20.

now to skim off the flies and then help themselves. Everybody is in a hurry, yelling and eating fast. You consistently hear "pass the coffee," "pass the milk," and so on for everything on the table. An old woman who has cooked in ranch and harvesting shacks all her life, and whom everyone calls "mother," does the cooking. I was told when she first came here the boys got a little bit too rough and she came from the kitchen into the hall with a "45" and told them to "git" and they "got."

In the afternoon we walked over the grounds around to Riverside Camp and down by the Salt Fork River. The water in this river is salty, but turtles, frogs and fish are plenti-



ful. Along about six o'clock the cows were driven in for milking. I counted over fifty head. One man takes care of the whole business, using two miking machines. A little later the farm hands began to drive in. Everybody rides; no one walks, for all the farm machinery is riding—plows, cultivators, binders and all of it. To see fifty to sixty teams drive into a barn yard is somewhat of a

sight. They work until sun down and have supper about eight o'clock. During this time our trunks arrived and we were given a key to our camp shed which consisted of a shed-like building, four rooms, about fifteen feet square each, and boarded up and down and that was all. Not a thing in it until we rustled two canvas army cots and one blanket. The days in this country are warm enough but the nights are cold. That night I never will forget. Having the one blanket only, we pulled the two cots together and spread it over both. I went to sleep after so long a time and awakened in about a half hour nearly frozen and more tired than ever from the hard bed. Did you ever try to sleep when you were real cold? Take my advice and don't try it. In a little while I arose and rolled up a pair of trousers for a pillow and donned a shirt. That helped a little, but not much and in the wee hours of the morning I again got up, opened my trunk and dug up my robe, wrapped myself as securely as possible and crawled back to my cold, hard couch. I was somewhat protected by this, but not enough to permit sleeping. A man in the next room snored loudly and talked incessantly. The bark of a dog, the occasional bray of a mule or crowing of the fowls and lastly the yell of a wild coyote in the corn field, just before the break of day, brought me to forcibly and made me feel conscious that I had spent one miserable night of ranch life. I jumped from bed, called my friend and dressed for a day of experience on the largest diversified farm in the world. A pair of heavy shoes, cor-



SADDLING AN OUTLAW HORSE. 101 RANCH. BLISS, OKLA.

A 101 Ranch postcard showing an "Outlaw" horse like the one Pfening rode.

duroy trousers, a plain, solid color blue shirt, felt hat, and a large red handkerchief around my neck for protection from the blistering sun constituted my dress. Every man was hurrying and rushing to get to the dining hall and when I got there the foreman was cussing beautifully because there was "not enough to eat for a working man to work all day on." And he would "fire the cook and get someone who could do it."

I ate a little breakfast food and milk, and drank a cup of steaming hot coffee, arose from the table and went outside to see the teams going to work. The first thing we did was to go to the fields and shock oats. A number of binders were cutting and binding the oats into bundles. We shocked oats for a half hour and then went to the barn and got a team of mules and took a six disc riding cultivator out to plow corn. That was a dandy job and I succeeded in cutting down several stocks of nice corn. This particular field had seventeen hundred acres of corn in it. From that I tried running a lister, which plows the ground, plants the corn, and covers it all up in one operation. The high waters and rain caused the Ranch people to replant 1000 acres of corn. We did a little of everything so as to have a slight representative knowledge of western farming. One day I crawled through, under, over, and into every part of a thrashing machine, and I know a few things now I never thought of before.

Did you ever see a broncho, and the greatest of all, an outlaw broncho, one that can't be ridden by the best riders sometimes? That was an experience that beat them all. It is the delight of the cowboy to get a "tenderfoot" on one of these uncontrollable animals and I had my turn at it. A very hungry, ugly beast was brought out one night and I was

told if I cared to, I could take a ride. I suppose they had thrown him down in the corral and saddled him. I made a leap, planted myself in one of those deep western saddles, quickly caught the reins and "Outlaw" was off like a rifle shot. I had been used to riding fast on a flat English saddle, so the deep western saddle was like a kitchen chair to a leather rocker in comparison.

We made one straight dash up the field in a straight line. I whirled him back and this seemed not to his taste at all for he then began the bucking, pitching and kicking. He did everything except trying to lay down and roll with me. But I stuck to my seat, which was a miracle, 'midst the open mouth wonderment and admiration of the big crowd of Ranch boys. For a half hour this lasted and in the last supreme moment of my success, he gave one last plunge, his head down between his fore legs and as his heels went high into the air, I sailed magnificently over his head into the water tank, landing on my back which cooled my ardent love for riding for the moment being. It took two cowboys two hours before they roped "Outlaw" and brought him back.

Perhaps the most exciting and picturesque sport that the Ranch affords is the frequent "round-ups" which take place during the season when the fat cattle are "cut" out to be shipped to the markets. The pastures are located nearly a day's ride from the camp and they start in the early morning and return late at night, with a midday lunch furnished out in the open by the "chuck wagon" which follows from the camp. These are



days that live in memory.

Last Sunday I was on the Ponca Indian reservation. Within a radius of twenty miles there are five tribes of blanket Indians, Osages, Poncas, Otoes, Pawnees and Tankawas. These Indians retain their primitive dress and costumes and their homes and tepees are more than interesting. I have talked to several of the Ponca Indians, particularly an old fellow by the name of "Gives Water." His wife was making me a pair of moc-casins, but I left too soon to get them. I have been on the buffalo range and saw a whole herd. I would have liked to have stayed the month of July for then the Poncas have their Sun Dance. I was on the grounds where the dance is held.

The 101 Ranch works about 80 men and they go and come in great numbers. All kinds and all classes are represented, college boys, bums, hobos, men with good homes and men with no homes at all. When we first arrived, Mr. Miller advised us to leave our valuables in the office. So we put our money in the safe and packed the more valuable articles from our trunks into our suit case and placed them in the office. Last Monday evening we went to the office for some things and brought our Kodak back to camp to take some pictures. Lots of men took a good look at it as we passed along, but we thought nothing of that. My friend Will deposited it in about the middle of his trunk that night. The next night we came home to discover the window open and the screen torn off. Further investigation revealed the trunk lock taken off very neatly. We at once made search and discovered that someone had stolen the \$30 Kodak and not touched another thing. Mad. That doesn't express it at all. We quickly went to the foreman to see who had left camp that day. We telephoned the Ponca City police to be on the lookout and the next day went there ourselves, but could not find it.

We were out scouring over the ranch so late that night that an old rancher and plainsman who roomed



Pfening sent this postcard to his future wife from the 101 Ranch on June 22, 1908. On the back he wrote: "This covers 100,000 acres, has a full tribe of Indians, buffalos, wild horses, cowboys and an old bullet-riddled stage coach. We have seen everything here. Fred, Bliss, Okla. '101' Ranch."

with us came out to hunt us. We got back the same time he did. He had secured a little whiskey and had it stolen also. He was as mad about it as we were. He offered \$20 reward for the thief because it was done while we were with him. He was certainly an interesting old man. He was a pioneer westerner and his many stories were great. That night we piled on our cots and he sat on the trunk, smoking pipe after pipe, and told us the story of his life. We finally went to sleep after midnight. It had begun to rain early in the evening and we were awakened by feeling the water running through on our feet. It was the loudest thunder and most vivid flashes of lightning I ever saw. The old man was in a dry corner, which was the only dry place in the room. My friend remained fast asleep and I pulled his cot into safety and placed mine between two streams which were running through the roof. The floor was covered with water, but I went to sleep and slept soundly until morning. We then began preparations for leaving.

Several other things happened which would be interesting to tell, but time and space forbids. Some of the things learned about the ranch while there was that it is the largest of its kind in the world, covering 100,000 acres stretching twenty

miles across in some places. It does a larger seed business than any seed house. They follow diversified farming and stock raising, and have 3000 acres in corn, 1200 in wheat, acres and acres in alfalfa, Kaffir corn, cotton, cane, millet, oats, and various other crops. Melons are raised in large quantities. There are thousands of horses, mules and cattle. At one time 35 binders were cutting wheat in one field. It takes a beef every day to supply their

own table. It is equipped with 35 miles of its own telephone lines, its own electric light plant, automobiles and a palatial residence. This Ranch is the owner of the 101 Ranch Wild West Show which has been out three seasons and is now showing in Canada. The entertainment given on June 11, 1905 in honor of the National Editorial Association of the U. S., at which over 2500 specially invited guests and 75,000 spectators were entertained, shows the resources of the owners of 101 Ranch.

To live this life as it exists is worth the time of anyone. The young fellows working in offices and stores would be healthier, wiser and wealthier in the knowledge of the joy of living out of doors if they were to throw off their linen, don primitive dress and go roughing it, not skipping anything because of hard work and a little dirt. My experience has tanned me brown as a berry, given me an appetite and hardened my muscles. I never felt so well in my life.

The last remaining wild spot where the real Western life exists with Indians, buffaloes, and wild animals where,

The forests sing their welcome; they bid us a moment give,

To come and commune with nature, and to learn what it is to live,

Where, watchful, the mighty mountains, eternal vigil keep,

Or where swiftly swirling water will lull our unrest to sleep,

Where by the evening camp fire 'tis job to forget old scores,

Remembering only that we are part of God's Great Out-of-Doors



## An Article From The Bandwagon Attic

# The Barnum & Bailey Circus Fire In 1910

By Will W. Brock

*This article appeared in the October 15, 1944 mimeographed Bandwagon.*

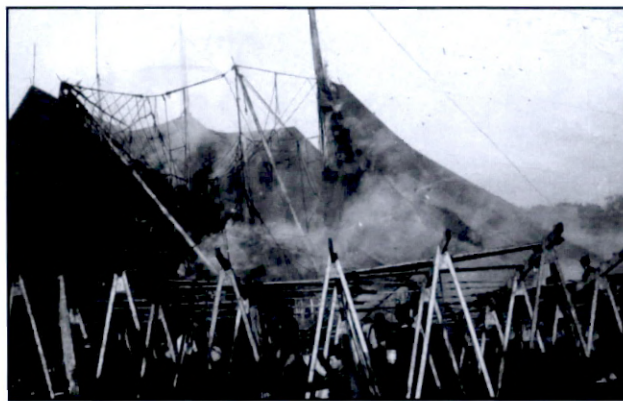
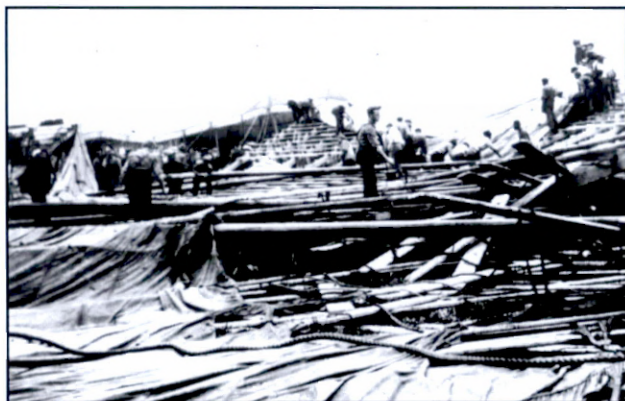
The Barnum & Bailey Circus played Schenectady, New York, on May 21, 1910. A fire broke out at 2 p.m. over the entire back end blues, just as Equestrian Director Ed Shipp

was about to blow the whistle to start the afternoon performance. It was a very small patch of fire on the top, two or three feet across the eaves and within arms reach of anyone standing on the top seat. This fact supported the belief that the fire was of incendiary origin.

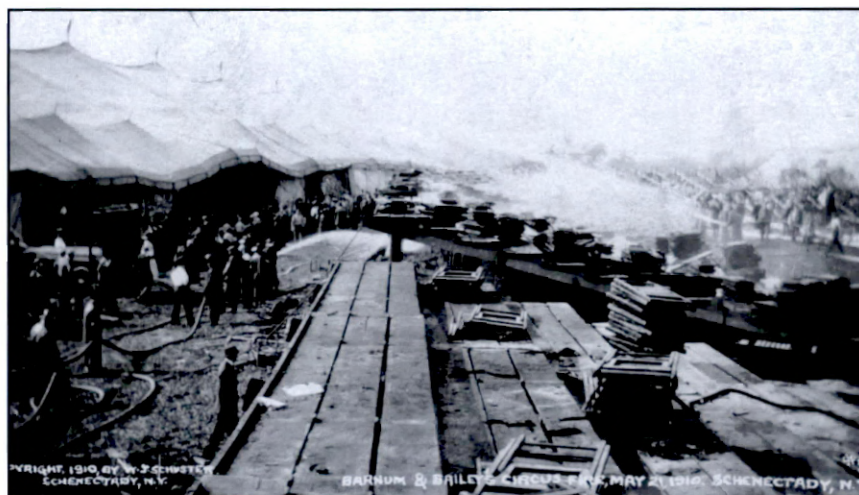
With allowance for plenty of bad

luck the Ringlings were always quite lucky, for in this case the lot faced a wide thoroughfare. On the opposite side of the street there was a large modern fire station and they had lines of hose and chemicals and their

All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.







entire equipment battled the fire from the very start. Even so the big top was the big loss.

Although an estimated 15,000 peo-

ple were in the seats, there was little alarm and no panic. The good management of the Ringling's was everywhere apparent. Be it remembered



at that the death of James A. Bailey, the Ringlings took over the entire Barnum property and the Barnum & Bailey was at this time under the immediate supervision of Otto Ringling. Everywhere loud voiced men were calling to the crowd to take their time in leaving the seats, but to leave them at once.

It was but a matter of minutes until the seats were vacated, the crowd standing on the track and in the rings watching the canvas men who had climbed the top and were trying to cut the fire out with knives, and the city Fire Department which had several lines of hose playing on it as well as the chemicals

Every one felt sure that they would soon have it out and the show would go on and they were reluctant to leave. But as soon as it became evident that the blaze was getting out of control the crowd scattered through the connection, the back door, and under the side wall in all directions and the entire top was empty in a remarkably short time and without any accident. Personally I didn't hear of anyone who complained of getting even his or her toes stepped on.

The real trouble was that the crowd mobbed the ticket wagons and demanded a refund. Obviously this could not be done and to relieve the pressure on the ticket men teams were harnessed and the ticket wagons were moved into the backyard.

Next Otto Ringling and the superintendent of canvas "Happy Jack" Snellin accompanied by a bookkeeper made a survey of the ruins. Snellin shouted out so many feet of such and such lumber, of such and such dimensions and the bookkeeper made notes. So much manila rope of various sizes, so many gallons of paint of such colors. When the round was made the accountant had an itemized report of everything needed for replacement. The show's agents left for Buffalo, the following Monday stand. The fire took place on Saturday afternoon.

The men who had left for Buffalo were to make these purchases of new supplies and see that they were on the circus lot when the show arrived for the Monday stand.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard in response to a telegram sent two masts to Buffalo. These were lashed





on top of an express car on a fast train. On the lot in Schenectady the show packed up and loaded much as though nothing was wrong.

The canvas wagons were taken to the storage car and the prior year's top was loaded in them. The two wagons went on the train in their respective places.

While there was a large salvage of the seats and grandstand, as well as poles, all were so badly scorched and blistered that every last piece had to be scraped, sanded and painted as well as large quantities of lumber used in making the repairs.

All equipment salvaged was loaded in its usual wagon and the wagons started for the train as soon as loaded. As I remember it, we were loaded and out of town in good time, say between 12:30 to 1:30 a.m. Sunday morning. The first wagons hit the lot in Buffalo at high noon Sunday.

The lot was already laid out and piles of lumber and bales and bales of rope and cordage, casks and barrels of paint and oil, and every item was placed in the exact spot where it was to be used. As the show came on the lot each wagon was spotted in its place and the real work began,

For example, a plank wagon was spotted on the back end. Before the team was unhooked seat men are on top of the load throwing off the seats. The instant one hit the ground it was caught up and scraped, flipped over to the next gang who sanded it passed along to the painters who slinged a coat of paint over it, and the last crew carried it out and set it up to dry.

This same routine went on with

every wagon load and equipment needing repairs was given to the mechanics for their attention before painting.

Aside from the two masts from the Navy Yard all material was purchased in Buffalo. The show had a large number of poles lashed on top of the stock cars and these together with what was obtained on the Buffalo waterfront refitted the top with poles.

Out in the center, the pole riggers were making up the "block and falls" and the "main guys for the center poles, and canvas men were working on the top. The light plant threw up an overhead system of floodlights that made the lot as light as a modern ball park and the work went on all night.

At midnight the cookhouse served a full Sunday dinner and the work went on until the morning. After breakfast in the horse tents, the menagerie and dressing rooms were the usual hustle and bustle getting ready for parade, which left the lot promptly at 10 a.m., for the entire world looking as though nothing had ever happened. On its return at noon, there was the last year's top up in the air already for "doors open" and the fire at Schenectady was a thing of the past.

Of course you must understand it was a terrible contrast with the new canvas, which had been so white, and flowing, and walking from the menagerie into the old top, so brown and grimy, was like as a canvas man put it, entering a railroad tunnel.

However the public was in possession of the facts and took all in good part, and realized that a wonderful

job had been done in a short time, replacing burned parts and setting up the last year's top.

Comparing old and new canvas it may be well to note that a big show opens every season with a new canvas complete and the prior season's top is carried in a storage car for emergencies.

Another thing that may be noted is the waterproofing of a big top. The top is spread out on the ground and sprinkled with paraffin melted in gasoline. The gas drives the paraffin into the fabric and quickly evaporates leaving the paraffin absorbed in the canvas. For a thorough job, the ground must be warm and dry and the day warm and sunny.

The Barnum Top in 1910 was paraffined under adverse conditions. The day was cold and damp, resulting in a very poor job. This was thought to have contributed to the spread of the fire after it was started, and supported the belief that someone fully understanding the situation had started it.

Many of the big top canvas men that season have passed into the Arena of the Life Beyond.

I well remember sitting in the cookhouse at supper in Schenectady after the fire and asking one of Happy Jack's men, a veteran of the tops, how many stands we were likely to lose. He smiled knowingly and said we are not likely to lose any. I asked if it was possible to run two hundred and fifty miles to Buffalo and repair the damage, and open the doors at one o'clock on Monday. He said he thought it could be done.

Well, that is exactly what was done!

Readers will appreciate the above eyewitness account of this disastrous fire. And with the holocaust of 1944 still clear in our minds, it will prove of interest. The CHS is fortunate in having two members, at least, who were employed by Barnum & Bailey when the fire occurred. Will W. Brock was an eight-horse driver on the show in 1910. Joseph L. Tracey was also employed in charge of some of the stock.





I think of this picture of Cheerful Gardner and my dad a lot. It was taken in 1951 by circus fan George Piercy on the Kelly-Miller Circus lot on a rainy day in Kokomo, Indiana. My dad was in charge of the elephants and Cheerful had come down from Peru to visit. My father was only 16 when Cheerful gave him his first job on elephants in 1920 with the Al G. Barnes Circus, and he remained my father's life-long hero.

I only met Gardner twice, on this occasion and two years earlier when he delivered three small elephants purchased from Irving J. Polack to the Kelly-Miller winter quarters in Hugo, Oklahoma. Owing to ill health, Cheerful was forced to retire and the punks were sold. Their names were April, May and June. As Gardner was about to leave he turned to my dad and said, "Bill, that square headed one will knock you down."

Later that day Obert Miller, patriarch of the Miller family, came to my dad and mentioned that he would like to have one named Hattie, after the first elephant he ever owned in 1939. So April became Hattie. The show already had an elephant named Juno so June became Norma, and the "square headed one" my dad was warned about became Anna May who was with our family for over fifty years.

My dad always talked fondly of his days with the Barnes show. When the elephants were unloaded in the morning they didn't march to the lot in teams as was customary. Cheerful didn't want anything to go to the lot empty handed so as each team was unloaded, they went in search of something to pull to the lot. At night they brought something back. Two young males named Barney and Vance always had the same load, a cage with a single lion in it named George.



My dad's first job was to act as brakeman on the lion cage during the parade. During parade the elephants were placed in tandem, Vance in front and Barney the wheeler. It didn't take Vance long to realize that both attendants were abroad the cage, so he would casually stroll along and let Barney pull the load.

On one such occasion my dad was instructed to jump down and make the first elephant take up the slack. When he jumped down he startled the wheeler who promptly cracked

him across the head with his tusk. My dad said he rolled into the gutter and after the parade had passed walked back to the lot, head in hand.

This lion cage was always spotted near the back door since George was the Balloon Lion and after he was back in his cage, Barney and Vance would take him to the train. As they were leaving the lot my dad said you could hear the band playing gallops for the races which was concluded by a man dressed as Uncle Sam Roman riding a long string of horses with an American flag streamer attached on the outside facing the audience, going "hell bent for leather."

Dad's first appearance in the performance was leading a howdah elephant in spec. He said there were three such elephants, one in each

ring with the one in the center carrying the Prima Donna (vocalist). You would have thought that this would be simple, but it was choreographed to where the elephants had to turn and point in different directions. My dad said he never did it to Cheerful's satisfaction and was yelled at regularly.

This is the Sparks show midway during a side show bally. I see a double banner for the minstrel show and a pretty good spread of canvas in the



background. I love the hats on those ladies, right out of an MGM musical. By this time, 1915, the show had five elephants handled by Louie Reed. Sparks had purchased two young males from William P. Hall, Ollie and Mutt, and more recently two females, Topsy and Queen, from Al G. Campbell's defunct Cole Bros. Circus.

Barbette came to the Polack show while I was there. He had an aerial rigging that revolved like a merry-go-round under which three ladies did an iron jaw routine. It was powered by a bicycle attached overhead which a young man in tights pedaled.

As a young man, Barbette did a trap act in drag at the Follies Bergere and at one time was the toast of Paris. He was among the peo-



expensive to feed, but like any new animals they were skittish for the

first few weeks.

We were showing Medinah Temple in Chicago which is simply a large theater. Just like in vaudeville, the acts waited in the wings to go on. Suddenly one day, disaster struck. The pigs bolted and ran amok, scattering the ante bellum ladies. Barbette came screaming across the stage, "My gulls! My gulls! Someone stop those wretched little beasts. What if one should go under my gulls' dresses?" I overheard one of the prop guys say, "It wouldn't be too hot for the pig either." This is a shot of myself with Richard Barstow on the left and Bob Dover in 1977.

This is my grandfather R. Z. Orton of the Orton Bros. Circus with his sons and my uncles Lawrence, Miles and Criley. The daughter is my oldest Aunt, Grace. On this show you literally doubled in brass. People were



ple John Murray Anderson brought to the Ringling show in the early 1940s along with Miles White and Richard Barstow. Barbette's actual name was Vander Clyde Broadway from Rock Round, Texas. He reinvented himself, among other things speaking with an affected manner with a French accent. The girls in the act he referred to as "His gulls." He always used Offenbach music which I enjoyed a lot.

On Polack the theme of his act was "Old Dixie," and the girls wore small Ante belum hoop skirts which they detached as they went aloft. Bobby Nelson had a pig act on the show and for some reason would only use the pigs for one season, starting each year with new piglets. I assumed they became too slow or maybe too





constantly exiting the bandstand to do an act and returning afterward. Lawrence's nickname was "Granny," and he was quite eccentric. He would sit backwards on the bandstand to keep an eye out that no one would sneak under the side wall. My mother called the horn Miles is holding a "peck horn."

I assume that learning how to play an instrument was taught in house. Many years later, my mother and I were at some public facility that had a piano and to my amazement she sat down and started playing it.

The Orton show in those days was called "high grass," which meant it showed in cow pastures, whereas a "low grass" show played cities. The Orton Circus traveled overland, meaning that horses pulled their wagons from town to town. Consequently, the route was confined to the upper Midwest with the winter quarters outside Des Moines, Iowa.

They did, however, take the show to Texas one winter, but on one occasion some cowboys on horseback stormed into the tent and shot up the show. R. Z. was wounded in the chest but survived another 25 years.

This is my earliest picture of Arky Scott, shown at right. Terrell Jacobs is at left. He started out as a menagerie hand and remained as such, but he could work elephants if the situation demanded. He inherited the job of elephant boss with the Cole Bros. Circus after both Eddie Allen and Alonzo Dever had left. With the close of the Cole show, Arky was hired to replace Hugo Schmidt on the Ringling show in 1950. The timing couldn't have been better since the movie *The Greatest Show on Earth* was made in 1951 and Arky became immortalized as the trainer during the elephant act who replaced the villainous Klaus.

I don't think a lot of people would recognize this scene in the last photograph. It's Ringling-Barnum about 1940. These elephants have just been unloaded and are waiting for the flats to be



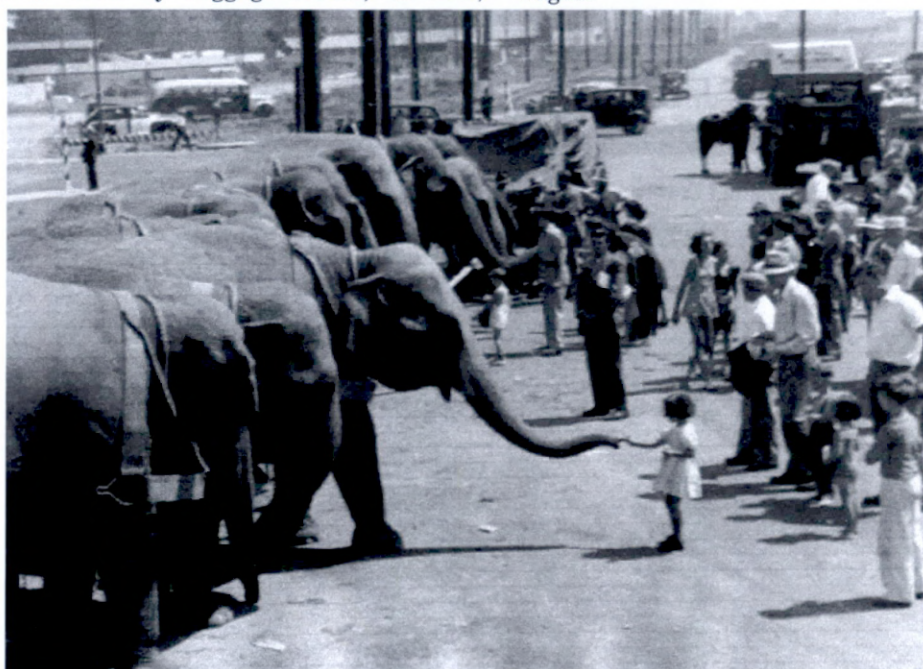
spotted so they can unload the train. In the background is Walter McClain's horse Harold, tied to a truck. The elephant being fed by the little girl is Joskey, who is easy to identify by her "Roman nose."

Up to 1939 this job was always done by baggage horses; however,

after the union teamsters went on strike in 1938, those horses (said to be 300) were eliminated along with the 100 men who worked them.

The elephants are already wearing their work harnesses which meant they probably wore them en route, the same as the baggage horses did.

Slivers Madison once told me that this was, at best, a difficult situation for the elephants. They were ill suited for such work, and they stumbled over cross ties and railroad tracks, especially at night. A good bit of time was spent each day doctoring their feet from injuries received from railroad spikes, broken bottles, etc. Fortunately this only lasted until the show acquired mechanized units to replace them, but not soon enough for McClain who was killed in 1942 while trying to scramble aboard a runaway baggage wagon to set its brake. He slipped and fell beneath the wagon. Slivers added that he was in the Army when this happened, and said he had heard that Francis "Streamline" Frizzel was in the office asking for Walter's job before they even had his body out from under the wagon.





# Side Lights On The Circus Business

## PART FORTY ONE

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the dates the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Daily Gazette.*

**August 17, 1918**

The title of the Al G. Barnes great animal show among show folks for years has been "The circus that is different." Mr. Barnes' earliest ambition in the business was to build up a circus that was different from all others. Like most other showmen, he started in the business when a boy with but little to attract attention from the public, but with one thought in mind and that was to build up a great animal circus that would be known the world over as the greatest of its kind.

This 1918 Al G. Barnes litho has the tagline "The Show That's Different." Image courtesy of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Digital Collection.

With this one object in view, he labored for years until finally the show grew to be so that it began to attract the attention not only of the general public, but also showmen the world over as the show that was different. Al G. Barnes animal circus is acknowledged the leader of its kind in the country.

Although in Janesville, he was handicapped by the shortage of laboring men and possibly 50 or 75 boys helped to erect the great canvas. Although it was an hour or more late in opening its doors, when the menagerie and circus tops were up and all the seats to accommodate the public much to the surprise of the audience, Mr. Barnes, for the comfort of his guests, had erected revolving fans on poles about ten feet from the entire length of the reserved seats. Al G. Barnes was the first in the field with a new idea for the comfort of his

patrons which certainly was much appreciated in Janesville.

As many times the case with different shows, I met an old friend with the Barnes show known the world over as "Col. Cummins," of wild west fame. Col. Cummins, some 15 years ago, traveled with one of the best wild west shows all over European countries, having with his show 20 different tribes of Indians and about 200 in number. The Colonel was arrested in Russia as a spy while he was a loyal American citizen, but known as a man with a lot of money, which afterward proved to be what they were after as they thought Colonel Cummins was liable to take too much money out of that country. He is a man who furnishes a concert which is largely of the wild west order. This show, as a rule, makes a much longer season than the other large shows, as their winter quarters are in Venice, California, about a dozen miles from Los Angeles, where they opened about the first of April.

When Mr. Barnes arrived in Janesville, he received a telegram from my old friend, W. K. Peck, who is the general agent of the show. The telegram was from New Orleans and gave Mr. Barnes something of an idea of the conditions of the southern country for a late run up into the fall which they expect to make. One of the busiest men around the show from the time it strikes the town in the morning until they leave at night is the press agent Thomas Dawson. Mr. Dawson is not only a press agent, but in the busiest times sells tickets around the show. When I inquired for him at the grounds in the afternoon, one of the employees said that if you want to find him in a hurry just tell someone around the show that you want to see "Skinny Dawson."

I don't think Skinny will have weight enough to be put on exhibition as a fat boy for he is certainly one of the busiest men around the show and always on the go. When I asked him how he happened to be in the business he said: "I started out with the Barnum show as a clown and while I did not last







The Al G. Barnes elephant herd in a parade around 1918. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

long as a clown, I guess they thought my acting as a clown would not appeal to the people, but my one ambition was to make good in some position around the show. So Mr. Barnes concluded that I should try at something else--and as this is my fourth year, I have at least made good in a way or I would not be here."

The show as a whole was well managed and will be well received should they see fit to visit Janesville again. The show went from here to Monroe where two of the largest houses of the season greeted them. They were packed down to the ring bank afternoon and night.

When Mrs. Gertrude West, the "Fat Lady" with the Zeidmann & Pollie Carnival Company, died in St. Mary's Hospital, Milwaukee, Tuesday afternoon, hospital authorities and deputies of the county coroner were confronted with a problem of handling her body. Mrs. West, who was 42 years old, weighed 658 pounds. Her death, according to attending physicians, was due to fatty degeneration of the heart.

The woman was brought to the hospital early Tuesday afternoon, suffering an infection in the left leg caused by a mosquito bite.

As the woman died on the third floor of the hospital the two coroner's deputies, Bernard Litza and

Walter Zehetner, were unable to remove the body. A call was sent to the morgue for aid in handling the body. Only when Deputy Coroner Henry Grundman and Assistant Coroners Albert Luebke, Byron Seidel and Thomas Klein responded, was it possible to remove the corpse. The coroner's troubles, however, had not ended as it was found that the body was too large for the icebox. It was taken to the autopsy room where it was placed on a large table. Mrs. West resided at Rock Island, Illinois.

An incident of unusual interest

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hobson.



took place with the Sells-Floto show a short time ago given by Mr. and Mrs. Hobson who celebrated their silver wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hobson, the well-known bareback riders with the Sells-Floto Circus, who also present an Indian troupe act in the big show, celebrated their silver wedding anniversary on July 29 at Shenandoah, Iowa, and made the members of the big show family happy at supper time. They provided an excellent variety of delicacies, both in quality and quantity, including ice cream and cake, candy and cigars for everyone connected with the circus from general manager down to pony boy, which was duly appreciated by all. At the conclusion of the repast all voted Mr. and Mrs. Hobson "royal" people and extended congratulations and wishes for a long and happy life. They are among the most popular of the Sells-Floto circus family.

"The weatherman is not treating us fairly. We are certainly having hot weather through Kansas," write friends from the "big show." Since the Barnum show hit Illinois, Kansas and Missouri business has been wonderful. At Kansas City business was the biggest in a long time. Folks were seated on straw and during the races they had to be ushered into the rings to prevent accidents.

St. Joseph, the next stand, was big; also Atchison and Topeka. At Kansas City many old-time show-folks paid a visit, including the Aerial Utts, Mrs. Bertha Rounds, Raggs Florence and the Florence Troupe, Dan Cahill, Dugger and many others. The writer also entertained many of his clown friends at his home. At St. Joseph, Harry Van Fossen of minstrel fame, visited the show. At Topeka the downs were the main attraction on the streets. The funny white face comedians sold over \$200 worth of W.S.S. Harry Stratton and Fred Bradna were the chief instigators. A well-dressed man climbed into the calliope and demanded Charles Carroll to play Over There. Mr. Carroll did so and as he finished was handed \$2.50. This same gentleman did the same thing to the clown band and the big band.



**August 24, 1918**

I have been asked so many times by different ones as to the reception the circus people in different towns and cities in which they exhibit receive. As a rule, I will have to say that the receptions 99 times out of 100 and perhaps more than that, were cordial ones in my time in the business. More especially was this so in the early days with the wagon show through the far west.

In many instances in 1878 the Burr Robbins show was the first one to invade the country, and as a rule, everybody in the town would be there to greet us and tell us how glad they were to get a chance to see a circus once more. Many of them have been living there from 5 to 12 years, some in regular built houses, but the majority in what was known as "dug outs" and "sod houses" and without any kind of a holiday the months and years went by slowly.

It made little difference whether our breakfast was at midnight or along toward morning. There were always a bunch of businessmen and citizens to bid you good-bye and ask you to come again. In the larger cities through the east in a way it was different, for there, as a rule, it was a business proposition and they would simply present their check, get their money and walk away.

The first time we showed in Boston was with the Adam Forepaugh show and when I received my contract from the general agent for the circus grounds, he told me that the grounds were the old ball grounds and belonged to a millionaire known all over Boston as a crank. Although this was the circus grounds for some years, he never had visited the show.

We showed there for two weeks and the second day he presented his check with a scowl on his face and said, "I think this is an imposition. I see that my check calls for silver as payment. Now what in the world am I going to do with \$2000 in silver?" I said: "Well, calling him by name, we try to use people in a way so that they will be sorry to see us go and always glad to have us come again. I have several packages of \$1000 in large bills and two of those I laid aside carefully for you so that you can place them in your inside pocket

and nobody will know whether you have \$2,000 on your person or \$1.50."

When I handed them to the old crank, he smiled and said: "You are 'Number One.'" The last show that visited in Boston made me take \$2,000 in silver and I had to hire a hack to take my money to the bank." I had quite a long visit with the old man about circus people. He told me much of Boston and how he had made his money, most of which had been left by his father, who had it in an early day and had doubled it many times. As we had dinner at the cook tent as soon as the afternoon show was out, I invited him to go to dinner with me so that he could say that he had at least one meal in the circus tent. When we went into dinner, I introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Forepaugh telling them that he was the gentleman that owned the



grounds. To make a long story short, there wasn't a single day during our engagement in Boston that he would not show up some time during the day to pay me a visit.

Another city we visited we were greeted from the mayor down, the chief of police, the landlord of the hotel, the feed man, the owner of the billboards, and they were ready to help us and give any assistance possible and that was in Toledo, Ohio. That was when "Golden Rule Jones" was the mayor and who was called "Golden Rule Jones" because his policy all through his administration was, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." He was certainly one mayor that believed in what many would say was the underdog. The last time we showed in Toledo, we arrived there on Sunday morning and something over 100 people were up at the Boody House,

which was the best hotel in Toledo at that time.

One Monday evening when I paid the landlord his bill, he said: "Mr. Watt, I wish you would pick out a dozen of your friends and come down to the hotel after the show is out and I will have a lunch for you in the main dining room." This I did and he gave us one of the nicest banquets that I ever sat down to at a hotel. We bid him good-bye just in time to get to our sleepers before the trains pulled out. I could relate many instances of this kind where dozens of landlords, lot men and feed men were only too glad to entertain us in a way so that we could always have a good word for their town.

The following notes from circus boys "Somewhere in France" will give you something of an idea of the loyalty of the boys in the different branches of circus business:

Eddie Deck of the Sells-Floto show was greeted with placards in many business houses while playing Nebraska reading: "We speak American and expect you to do the same. If you don't know the language, learn it. If you don't wish it, 'GET OUT.'"

Jerrie Desire Martin writes from "Somewhere in France" that he is still doing his act (contortion) at Y.M.C.A. Huts, in the trenches, at hospitals and on July 4th at a banquet in honor of some French and American generals. He also says he hopes to be doing some performing in Berlin by Christmas.

Jerrie Desire Martin in another communication from "over there," states that they are using the band there as military police, while the others are raising hell with the Boches. He also says "Fritz" don't believe we are Americans as Americans are not good fighters "he's learning fast." His address is Headquarters Co. 327th Inf. Band, A.E.F. France.

Ronald M. Stephen, a former strong man with Ringling Brothers circus and on the Pantages Vaudeville circuit, has been granted a warrant in the U. S. Marine Corps with the rank of corporal. He is acting as an instructor at the Recruiting Depot at Mare Island, California.

Jack LeClair (Gohn B. LeClaire)



who has spent the past three seasons with the Ringling circus as a clown, enlisted July 18 and is now stationed at Paris Island, S. C. His address is: Private John B. LeClaire, Co. 269, Bat. W. Marine Barracks, Paris Island, South Carolina.

Harry Benson, who intended going out with the Sparks show this season but was called by the draft, writes that he is still on the job, but would rather be on the road. He sends regards to all his friends.

Sergeant William F. Beers, who is now stationed at Fort McPherson (Atlanta, Georgia) and formerly of the Ringling show, sends best regards to his circus friends.

### August 31, 1918

All of the tented shows of today are having their own troubles to get from one town to another and erect their tents and give exhibitions. This holds good from the small show up to the great Ringling and Barnum shows. If the war continues, it would not be strange if many of the old-timers who have been considered back numbers the last few years, would find their services would be valuable next season. It is not, as a rule, its working force which suffers the worse, yet in every department about the big circuses, the manpower has been sadly depleted.

Word comes from Josie De Mott Robinson telling of her plans for the future--New York Circus Gossip--"Mrs. Josie De Mott Robinson and her mother, Mrs. James De Mott, and Rono Oakley have taken apartments at Atlantic City for the last half of the summer. Mrs. Robinson took up a very difficult course at Columbia University for "overseas" work in rebuilding "our boys" who have suffered the loss of eyes, ears, arms or legs. She is awaiting the call to sail over and practice her war profession." To a few old-timers in Janesville this will be interesting news as the James De Motts were the early riders in the business and put in two or three seasons with the Burr Robbins shows in the middle 70's. The last time the Barnum & Bailey show visited Janesville under the management of James A. Bailey, Josie De Mott Robinson was the principal writer at that time and for

many years later the De Mott family were famous in the business. Josie later married Charles Robinson, youngest son of the late John Robinson, a famous circus manager of Cincinnati.

As more or less has been said about tented shows and the money they received from the people, the following article, giving a detailed account of the part show folk are doing in the war, will certainly be interesting, the most of which was published in the Billboard of last week.

"To the Officers and members of local units of the National Council of Defense. Greetings: If you are banded together to help win the war and truly inspired by real patriotism, and we sincerely believe that you are, you will not refuse to investigate carefully and duly weigh and consider the following incontrovertible claims, viz.:



"1. Actors and actresses were among the very first to volunteer their services at the thousands and thousands of benefit performances which before and since the United States entered the war were held to raise funds for the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., Soldiers Smokes Funds, Belgian, French, Serbian, Greek and Armenian Relief Funds, Ambulance Funds, Hospital Funds, etc. No authentic figures are obtainable, but the total amount of money raised by this means was enormous. It was at least \$400,000,000 and probably half as much again and the artists and performers of America are entitled to the major part of the credit for it

"2. Thousands of artists have entertained our soldiers in cantonments here at home, not only free of charge, but also in many cases paying the railroad fare and hotel bills involved out of their own pockets.

"3. Thousands more, at General Pershing's call, enlisted to go abroad and perform the same service over there. Several units have already sailed.

"4. All showmen without exception have thrown their tents, their opera houses and their moving picture theaters open to the Four-Minute Men and when these were not forthcoming have addressed the audiences themselves or had some gifted employee perform the service.

"5. Showmen were among the very first to jump forward and lead in the War and Thrift Stamp drives.

"6. Showmen were among the very first to spread recruiting propaganda for the government. They hung posters and scattered handbills in every nook and corner of the land, reaching and covering thoroughly districts that could never have been reached in any other way.

"7. Not one American actor, actress or showman has been convicted of disloyal deeds or utterances. Two actresses, one a Dutch vaudeville actress and the other a Spanish prima donna were convicted abroad, but not one American artist or manager has been arrested on suspicion.

"8. Many showmen are inspired by a loftier motive than merely keeping their title (and investment) alive, although that may be very necessary as it oftentimes represents their all, because many educators, publicists and men high in the government services have assured them that they are performing not only useful, but highly valuable service in dispelling gloom and scattering sunshine, thus helping to sustain the spirit and morale of the people.

"9. The percentage of actors, press agents, advance agents and showmen who have volunteered as dollar-a-year men for Y.M.C.A. field service and for various services and of actresses who have volunteered for nurses, canteen workers, entertainers, hostesses and for clerical positions is higher than that of many classes.



"The war will be won by the team work of those at home almost as much as by our soldier boys over there.

"Show folks want to help to win the war as much as the most fervid members of the National Council of Defense. They are helping. All they ask is a chance to continue unmolested.

"They have an inalienable right to bring their wares to your market and to offer them therein. If you do not wish to purchase do not. They will take no exceptions to your course.

"You have received no orders from your national officers to persecute showmen or actors.

"Restrain the ill-advised, the young, the hasty and the impetuous among your members.

"And do not allow your local council to be used to gratify the personal Prejudices and spites or further the selfish business schemes of designing tradesmen and petty politicians."

#### September 7, 1918

It was early in the spring of '84 that I received a letter from Adam Forepaugh saying: "Dave, I wish you would come on a few days earlier this spring than usual as there will be about thirty European performers arriving in New York on such a date and I want you to go over and meet them and bring them to Philadelphia." This I did and there were performers from England, Germany and Austria and a man and his wife from Paris, France. The general agent, Sam Watson, had heard of a strong man by the name of George Jagendorf, an Austrian who was working in one of the features in Vienna and was not long in putting him on a three-year contract with Adam Forepaugh. He proved to be one of the big features of the great Forepaugh show for three years. His act was to lift the largest horses that could be brought to him during the season and never did one show up so big that the young Austrian could not lift him.

While he could speak but little English, the great cities of New York and Philadelphia were the first cities that he had seen. When he went out to the show grounds which were about ten acres, the first thing that

he said to me was: "Everything in America so big." The crowds that filled the great tents in Philadelphia for two weeks were immense and many times in the afternoon and evening, he would stand back of the lot and watch the thousands of people buying tickets for the show. One afternoon he had a young man come with a Kodak to take a picture of the ticket wagon with a policeman on top and the writer inside selling tickets. After the young man had shown his three or four snapshots that he had taken, the Austrian took one of them saying: "This one will do me."



Without saying a word, he sent a picture to Vienna, Austria to his father who was one of the largest manufacturers of Meerscham pipes and cigar holders in Europe with orders for him to make a cigar holder with a picture of the ticket wagon, the crowds rushing up to buy tickets, the man inside selling and the policeman on top. This was done, and some six weeks or more later, I was presented by the young Austrian with a Meerscham cigar holder which was carved out of a solid block of Meerscham. On one side of the body of the ticket wagon were the words, "Adam Forepaugh's Greatest Show." On the other side is engraved an elephant riding a bicycle and other images with 19 people rushing up to the ticket wagon for tickets. It was only a few days ago that I took a look at it and could only wonder if the young Austrian who presented it to me was still alive or whether he was in the army in his country and possibly long before this had met his death. If there was anyone in Austria who doubted about the greatness of the United States, it was certainly not this young man for he had seen the United States for three years

from every angle from California to Maine.

While this Meerscham is of little value, it is one of the tokens I received with many others in the "good old days."

On Tuesday, Mrs. Al Ringling, the widow of the late Al Ringling, left Baraboo for her suburban home near Lexington, Kentucky. She was making the trip in her large touring car, accompanied by her chauffeur and a lady friend. They stopped over in Janesville for 6 o'clock dinner and after visiting with a few friends motored toward Harvard where they stayed overnight.

Her country home, four miles from Lexington, is a beautiful one located on six acres of ground and is directly opposite beautiful golf grounds and the interurban cars pass her door every twenty minutes. The road passing her home is a boulevard for several miles, and it is there that she expects to spend the winter.

The following letter from the Ringling show will be of interest to a few at least of the older settlers in Janesville, for it was here that the Davenport family took their first lessons in riding with the Burr Robbins show: "Lulu Davenport of the Davenport Troupe with the Ringling shows, on the occasion of her birthday recently, was well remembered by her many friends, and she was the recipient of many presents from members of the shows. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ringling gave her a beautiful wristwatch. Mrs. Sam Dill, of the Robinson show, also remembered her with gifts, as did the ladies of the dressing room with the Ringling shows.

"Probably the first instance this season of a railroad taking advantage of the war clause in its contract with the circus, by which circus movements are deferred to permit the movement of troop trains or war supplies, occurred last week when the Pennsylvania R. R. on twenty-four hour notice, refused to haul the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus from Aurora, Illinois where the circus played Saturday, August 17, to Hammond, Indiana where the circus was billed to exhibit the following Monday and which date it was forced



to cancel. At that time it looked as though the circus would lose the entire week of the 19th, as several of the runs were on the Pennsylvania. In that event the show would have been compelled to move direct from Aurora to this city, where it is showing today. Fortunately, however, the Pennsylvania consented to receive the show Tuesday and moved it to Logansport, but too late for either a parade or an afternoon performance, while the night business was hurt by a threatening storm.

"This was the second time this season the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus canceled Hammond, the first showing being scheduled for the day on which one section of the circus train was wrecked near Gary, Indiana."

#### September 14, 1918

As far as I can hear from the different shows all over the country, the verdict seems to be about the same: shortage of labor to help move the shows from one town to another and to get the canvas up seems to be about the only trouble that they have to encounter, and this holds good with the small shows as well as the larger ones. Oftentimes the parade and afternoon show is missed and yet as a rule, almost invariably the patronage is usually good. If the present weather conditions should hold on for a while possibly that, with the shortage of help, may have something to do with the early closing of most of them. Some of the smaller ones have already made arrangements to go south and will try and keep on the road well up towards the holidays. As long as the big shows like the Barnum & Bailey and the Hagenbeck-Wallace can keep on the road, that will help to shorten up the long and expensive part of wintering the big ones. Just how much the shortage of help will affect them the coming season is something that will be worked out especially with the larger shows later in the winter. With the big shows it is not only a shortage of drivers and canvasmen, but where the properties form the net work under the entire

This Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus newspaper ad was used in 1918.

big top where the performance is given, it is there that the boss property man with such shows as the Barnum & Bailey and the Ringling Brothers have to have from 80 to 90 men to handle that part of the show successfully, which is the one thing that has to be put up exactly right where the aerial performers are working high in the air and turning double from one side of the canvas to the other. It is absolutely necessary that all their trappings should be in place to insure safety in their work. As Joe Miller, the boss property man with the Ringling show, told me in Rockford a few weeks ago, that while he was entitled to 95 men to handle the properties, there were many times that he had only about one third of that number.

I know of no business where the people from one end of the show to the other are as loyal as they are with the circus, for no one from the manager down thinks he or she is any too good to put their shoulder to the wheel and help out in time of need. In many cases the women take hold and help get the show in shape when the manager thinks that it is almost impossible to get ready to give even one performance. I think the general verdict with the big show will be that the big spectacular features which have been given for several years back by both the Barnum & Bailey and Ringling shows will be cut out the coming season and get

back to the all circus performance which will cut down the sleepers to some extent and possibly many of the big tableaux with the big shows could be sidetracked without taking anything from the drawing powers of the show or even the entertainment of the people, but these are all advanced ideas and only speculation as to what might come.

Little Fugi Orton, a member of the Orton Troupe with the Ringling Bros. shows, fell from a pedestal while that attraction was playing Duluth, Minnesota, August

17th, fracturing his spine. The injury is quite serious, but Orton is improving and his physician reports good chances of recovery. However, it will require months for him to be out and around again. At present he is at St. Luke's Hospital, Duluth, and would appreciate hearing from all his friends.

Ray M. Brydon, ticket seller with the Hagenbeck-Wallace shows where he worked the connection in company with Harry Wertz (formerly of the Gollmar Bros. shows), blew into the Cincinnati offices of the Billboard intent on back numbers of the paper detailing the story of the wreck.

Brydon left the show June 4th last at Burlington, Vermont, and proceeding to Boston, enlisted in the Shipping Service. His first voyage was on the Hwah-Jah (Chinese meaning First Ship), she being the first vessel turned out under contract for the United States by China.

She carried troops destined for Genoa, Italy, and 450 miles out was attacked by a sub. The gunners on the Hwah-Jah, however, got the sub, and the troops were safely landed at their destination, after which the transport proceeded to Le Havre and discharged cargo.

She made the return voyage to an Atlantic port safely and Brydon got ten days' leave with an optional extension of ten days more which he decided to put in on a visit to his home at Indianapolis.

Just to keep his hand in he is working for Johnny J. Jones at the state fair this week, incidentally



picking up his transportation back to "an Atlantic port."

Brydon is only one of thousands of the boys that are doing their bit—doing it cheerfully, doing it well and doing it eagerly.

It is said that Arthur Randolph Martin, tattooed man who has a picture of the German warlord tattooed on his chest, is going to undergo the very painful operation of having the skin removed and new grafted in its place in order to enlist in the marines. Still we read of some who commit suicide to keep from going.

Truly a trouser makes a conscientious soldier.

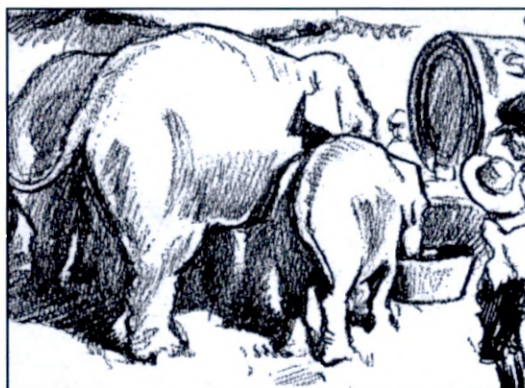
### September 21, 1918

After an absence of more than 20 years the big circus under canvas has again invaded the lake front, not the lake front as it was years ago, for the Adam Forepaugh show was the last to show under the canvas on the lake front in the days when the waves of the great lake dashed up within a few feet of the canvas. This, to me, brings back many reminders of days long ago. Those were days when one man had to do all the work in the ticket wagons, sell all the tickets, pay the bills and pay the people. In those days there were something around 700 on the payroll.

I well remember when the Forepaugh show showed on the lake front two weeks to a turn away business almost every day. A large percent would naturally think that a two weeks' stay would be appreciated by the average one with the circus, but this is usually not so. We work usually much harder in Chicago than the one-day stands on the road for the reason that I was in the wagon early in the morning and seldom would leave it until eleven o'clock at night. Many times at the evening performance Mr. Forepaugh would send me word to close down the wagon a little before eight o'clock with thousands of disappointed people that were turned away at the close of one engagement here. On Saturday night Mr. Forepaugh was counting up the last house and three safes already in the ticket wagon were full of money. I had three Stark A grain bags full of silver dollars lay-

ing on the floor of the ticket wagon and I told Mr. Forepaugh to let me put them in the New York Exchange when I got to South Bend, Indiana on Monday and that I did not care what the cost would be as I could not take the chance of leaving the silver laying in bags on the floor.

The old man looked over his glasses at me and said: "Dave, you are the biggest fool I ever had around me in a way; you are always worrying over what you got. That don't worry me for a second, it is the money that I cannot get that worries me. I think the money is as safe here in the wagon as it would be in New York Exchange or some balloon bank that might go into the air so quickly that you would not know which way it went. Stop your worrying over what you got."



In those days it made but little difference whether we showed on the lake front or on State and 22nd Streets. Chicago always gave the Adam Forepaugh show a warm welcome and we usually left there with many thousands of dollars to the good.

But these are only memories of the past and while I have thought that I would like to back up a few years and go over the road again, so far, I have found no way that it could be done.

The following letter will give you something of an idea of the hardships and disappointments that the big shows have to encounter:

"Negotiations were concluded last week whereby the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus will play a two weeks' engagement on the lake front in Chicago for the benefit of the Stage Women's War Relief, Chicago branch.

"The circus will change its route at Indianapolis where it shows on

September 18, jumping to Chicago, opening there September 20, continuing until October 5th when, in all probability, the circus will close for the season and ship to the winter quarters at West Baden, Indiana, although the management has not made an announcement to that effect.

"The Chicago engagement should bring wonderful results for the Stage Women's War Relief which organization is doing such excellent work in behalf of the members of the profession in the service. With the location of the shows on the old circus lot near Grant Park, it seems hardly possible to have other than very large business if the weather conditions are at all favorable.

"Incidentally this will be the first time in over twenty years that a circus has played on the lake front lot. The last circus to show there was the Adam Forepaugh (& Sells Bros.) show in 1897. For a number of years the Barnum & Bailey and Forepaugh shows had alternated in using the lot. With the establishing of the big retail district in the vicinity considerable opposition to the circuses playing there developed, culminating in the city authorities barring shows after a complaint from Marshall Field Company following the Forepaugh engagement that the lot had been left in bad condition.

"On account of the downpour of rain last Wednesday, the Ringling Bros. shows were forced to abandon the two performances scheduled for that date. The last of the show trains arrived shortly after six o'clock and the process of unloading started immediately. However, as the rain continued and it seemed impossible to get the large wagons to the show grounds, the management gave the order and soon the latter were being loaded on the cars. At Springfield, the day previous, the afternoon performance was not given until five o'clock and at Peoria on Monday, only the night show was presented because of the inclement weather. This city made the fifth consecutive stand where no parade could be given for the same reason.

"The Hagenbeck-Wallace shows played the Lincoln (Nebraska) State



Fair for four days during the week of September 2. It was some fine engagement and the circus folk certainly enjoyed themselves, watching the races and taking in the different shows. The Wortham & Rice carnival was also there and they treated our bunch excellently. Mr. Rice gave our members tickets that admitted all to the show. Everyone of us wishes to thank him for the courtesy. The ladies of our show could be seen all around the grounds picking up tinfoil which they gave to the Red Cross. By the way, the ladies have turned over to that cause nearly 400 pounds of tinfoil this season.

"As the last act of the afternoon performance was being staged under the white top of the Sells-Floto circus at Columbia, Missouri, August 28, a rain, hail and wind storm struck the lot and in a moment the pit show, dressing tent and horse tent were blown down, but the big top, filled with people, held its position. No one was injured in the least. The night show was given on time with the dressing rooms arranged under the big top."

#### September 28, 1918

While I have always been for the circus and believe that the circus has for us all, little did I think thirty years ago that Uncle Sam would ever launch out in the business. But the following letter reads as though he considered it a necessity for the relaxation of the men in the different cantonments: "Word has come out from Washington that Uncle Sam is going into the circus business, as last Saturday the commission on training camp activities signed a contract with the firm of Perry & Gorman, 1547 Broadway, New York, whereby a one-ring circus will be added to the theatrical and amusement activities of the government.

"According to the

announcement the season will begin December 12 and will continue for sixteen or more weeks. Each of the present thirty-two cantonments will be visited by the tented aggregation, which will stay three days at each cantonment.

"Perry & Gorman put on the Regimental Indoors circus last February at Camp Upton, where it was such a success that it was repeated the following week at Camp Dix.

"The fronts of the liberty theaters at the camps will be converted into a big circus tent, giving a realistic impression of a genuine big top circus. The shows will be billed with regular up-to-date circus posters, the stage setting will be a 30 by 60 foot circus tent, the regular camp bands will be used and there will be sixteen feature acts with each performance, besides the additional attractions of the sideshow variety, such as Charles Zimek, the legless wonder, and others of that kind, to remind the boys of their childhood days when the circus came to town.

"Among the acts already engaged for the circus are the Berie family,

consisting of four girls, acrobatic and fancy divers, with their mother, a wet comedienne; the Flying Herberts, consisting of three people, two men and a woman in aerial act; the Burns Sisters act, high wire, hand to hand balancing, finishing with contortion; Captain Snell and his three performing lions; the Ransom sisters, three whirlwind lady tumblers; Drakes Pony circus, consisting of three ponies and an unridable mule; Smith's dogs and jumping hounds, and several other attractions sure to please the boys in the camps."

Word has been received of the death of Charles Wertz, one of the famous troupe two years ago when Janesville and Rock County people will well remember the work of this famous troupe when the Barnum show visited Janesville. Of the original troupe that Adam Forepaugh brought over to this country in '84, there are only two left. Toto Siegrist, who turned doubles from one side of the canvas to the other in mid-order, and Eddie Silbon, the only two out of

The Siegrist-Silbon flying act. Toto is far left in back row. Eddie Silbon is second from left in first row.





seven that started in the business. This troupe is the one that I went from Philadelphia over to New York to meet on their arrival from England in 1884. Toto Siegrist is now 56 years of age and Eddie Silbon about 50. The troupe has been famous with the Barnum show for years and it was always the closing act for years prior to the hippodrome races.

"Charlie (Chad) Wertz, well known circus performer and catcher in the Siegrist-Silbon act with the Barnum & Bailey circus, died suddenly in this city last Monday, September 9. Mr. Wertz was 50 years of age at the time of his death and had been associated with the Barnum show for the past 20 years. The remains, accompanied by the widow, Elizabeth, were shipped Wednesday to Lincoln, Nebraska, for interment. Many beautiful floral pieces were arranged by the members of the Barnum & Bailey circus as a token of respect to their departed comrade."

Word has been received from France of the death of Jerry Clayton who for some years was connected with the Barnum & Bailey show and was considered one of the highest class clowns in the business.

There have been many questions asked regarding the gold star in the service flag of the Barnum circus, containing over 600 stars representing that number of our boys who have been called to the colors. The gold star is in honor of Jerry Clayton who was killed "somewhere" in

France while fighting for his country August 31. A short time ago Mrs. Joseph Dekos received a letter from one of the boys who was in the same company with Jerry and wrote that Jerry sent his regards to all his friends and that he was getting the new "gags" ready for next season. He also stated that their company was in the thickest of the battle and the first to bring in German prisoners. Jerry was loved by all.

While passing a troop train in the west the Barnum & Bailey show turned everything through the circus train upside down to furnish eatables and magazines, books or anything that could be found about the show that would interest the soldiers.

Between Cheyenne and Salt Lake City, as the fourth section of the circus train passed the troop train, the ladies presented the "boys" with coffee, sandwiches, cake and fruit and the cars were searched for books to give them. As the train left, the soldiers loudly cheered the circus folk.

Today the Barnum & Bailey show is in San Antonio, Texas and the great Ringling show is in Atlanta. Just how late these shows will stay out is not known, but as the cotton crop of the south is bringing good money, it is safe to say as long as business and the weather permit. The shows will probably close the middle of October to the 20th. The

The Ringling-Barnum elephant herd in the Bridgeport winter quarters about 1920.

Hagenbeck-Wallace show which is now on the lake front in Chicago (the first show in over 20 years to exhibit in that location) is doing a wonderful business. On Sunday last at the two performances over 20,000 people attended.

#### October 5, 1918

If W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), the famous old scout, could come back today and walk into Paris and take a look at his old show grounds there which took its name from him years ago as "Buffalo Park," he would hardly recognize it.

It is stated that Buffalo Park, near the city of Paris, France, which used to be the stamping grounds of Buffalo Bill's troupe of cowboys, Indians and the other attaches of his Wild West show, has been taken over by the American Red Cross to house its horses and ambulances.

The following letter gives an account of a successful pavement dance given in Chicago by the Showmen's League of America which has netted several hundred dollars. Whether they copied after similar dances held in Janesville is not known: "The pavement dance given by the ladies' auxiliary of the Showmen's League of America on Saturday evening, September 14, proved to be quite a success. Owing to the fact that a great many of the members of the auxiliary are on the road at the present time, the ladies were short of workers, but those who were in the city put their shoulders

to the wheel and worked doubly hard for the success of the affair. It is impossible at this time to say how much was realized in the way of profits as a great many tickets are still out and unaccounted for, but it is safe to say that the net returns will amount to several hundred dollars. Many of the out of town members took tickets to dispose of at their respective shows and most of them have been able to dispose of more tickets. A great





deal of credit is due the members on the road for their assistance in disposing of tickets.

"A part of the profits from the pavement dance will be donated to the Showmen's League of America for a cemetery fund. The balance will be used for the purchase of yarn with which to make knitted articles for the boys who are in the service. The members of the auxiliary wish every member of the league who is one of Uncle Sam's fighting men to know that he may have one of their knitted outfits (consisting of sweater, helmet and wristlets) if he will send his address to either the secretary of the league or the secretary of the auxiliary."

The free act entertainment featuring the Wisconsin State Fair, Milwaukee, the week of Sept. 9-14, proved to be a veritable reunion of John Robinson circus acts. There were the famous Duttons, Jim, Winnie and Effie and Mrs. Dutton, who is traveling with them, all of whom traveled with the Robinson show for from nine to eleven years. In fact, Jim Dutton learned and put together his present act with that show. Then there were George Holland and wife (Rose Dockrill), who were married while with the Robinson show and were with the show thirteen years. They also had Madam Dockrill with them. The Curran sisters, who learned their teeth at the winter quarters at Terrace Park and worked the act with the Robinson show, were a pleasing feature of the big program. Ed Holland, who was assistant equestrian director and handled all the high school horses for the show for several years and who now has the famous [Ebenezer?] mule of Ham Tree fame, made a big hit at the fair. He will be remembered as one of the features of the McIntyre & Heath act for three seasons. Then to make the reunion complete, there was John G. Robinson and his elephants, a big feature wherever seen. With the four big feature acts of the fair, ex-John Robinson show acts, there was much story telling and reminiscing which was highly entertaining.

Mr. Robinson, after playing Oklahoma City, Wichita and Dallas with his elephants, will start over the

Orpheum circuit to the coast.

Chief blame for the wreck of the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus train at Ivanhoe, Indiana on June 22 in which sixty-seven passengers and one trainman were killed and 127 passengers injured, is placed upon Engineer Al Sargent by W. P. Borland, chief of the bureau of safety, in a report to the interstate commerce commission.

Spacing of automatic signals along the Michigan Central line is criticized and the construction of the circus company's cars which were all wooden and lighted with oil lamps is partly blamed for the disaster. The report states: "This accident was caused by engine man Sargent being asleep and from the cause failing to observe the stop indication of automatic signal 2581, and the warnings of the flagman of the circus train and to be governed by them."

#### October 12, 1918

A few weeks ago in the corridor of the hotel a friend of mine introduced me to Dr. Fred Wallace, a prominent dentist of Chicago, whose office is in the retail store of Marshall Field & Company. My friend said: "Dr. Wallace and I were business friends together in Baraboo, Wis. many years ago, and in boyhood days, Dr. Wallace took to the show business long before the show bug had entered the heads of the famous Ringing brothers. Now, Dave, here is the chance of your life for a visit, for the doctor knows every showman in the business for more than forty years back."

The first ones that the doctor mentioned in the business that he had been intimate with more than forty years ago was Adam Forepaugh and his first big seller, Ben Lusbie. As I joined the Forepaugh show in '82 and took Ben Lusbie's place in the ticket wagon, I was soon relating happenings in gone by days

The doctor said: "Long before I was out of my teens I joined the Haverly

Minstrels and for seven years was ticket agent and treasurer and also assistant manager to Mr. Haverly. It was about this time that Mr. Haverly got together the largest and finest minstrel show of 40 men that was ever put before the public. He made contracts to tour Europe for some two or three years. While I was anxious to go, my father and mother would not agree to it and said that it was time that I should settle down in some other business. It was then that I concluded to go into the dentist office in Chicago and to become a dentist.

"Mr. Haverly then engaged the late Charles Frohman, who lost his life in the Titanic, as his ticket agent and treasurer. This was the starting of Charles Frohman in the show business."

Dr. Wallace is a distant relative to Ben Wallace, the famous showman of Peru, Indiana, who for many years was proprietor of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show which still bears his name. Dr. Wallace was a schoolmate of the Ringling boys at Baraboo, and there is not a circus man in the country that Dr. Wallace is not familiar with their career. It was the dimming of the lights in the office of the hotel that closed our visit, and when he bid me good-bye, he said: "Mrs. Wallace and I left Chicago in the large touring car on the 11th of April last, equipped with everything from a cook stove to an ice chest and have been on the move ever since. We camped out when we felt like it and when we did not, we stopped at the hotels and have been 350 miles above Winnipeg, Canada. This visit with you over the old days has certainly been one of the finest of my life. Sometime, Dave, when you are in Chicago, come and see me and we will reminisce. Adam Forepaugh I always considered the greatest singlehanded showman that I ever





knew, for the reason that he never had a partner. I knew him so well that the incidents that you mention during your time with him are typical of the great showman."

It is currently reported that the Ringling Brothers will depart from their time-honored custom of wintering the Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Shows at Baraboo, Wisconsin, and that Bridgeport Connecticut will be the winter quarters this season of the Barnum & Bailey show. The season of the Ringling circus closes at Clarksdale, Massachusetts, on October 18, and according to the report, the railroad contracts are already made to the Connecticut city.

There is much conjecture as to the reason for the reported move, but the most plausible advance would be the scarcity of labor, making it advisable to concentrate the winter working forces at one place instead of attempting to separate crews in two widely apart cities.

Louis Ruhe, the well-known New York animal importer, has succeeded in landing (under special government license) eight India elephants and nine Bengal tigers in this country. As the demand for elephants has become acute, Mr. Ruhe decided last spring to send two of his most experienced animal collectors to India. Heavy odds were against him, as there was no certainty of securing ship space to bring the animals and furthermore, freight rates had been advancing at an alarming rate for some time. Endless obstacles were finally overcome and the animals reached New York last week after an eventful three months' trip.

Mr. Ruhe predicts that no further elephant importations will reach this country for some years to come, as the freight and insurance alone on every elephant amounts to over \$1,000 now, and these high rates will prevail for several years after the war is concluded.

Captain Rob Young (Leonard W. Calvin), the lion tamer who is now in the navy and stationed at Great Lakes, Illinois, is training a bear act to be seen with the Navy Vaudeville show which is to start on tour soon. The profits of the tour will be used to



Henry Ringling, 1868-1918.

erect a hospital for the sailors' wives at the Great Lakes Training Station where they will receive medical attention free of charge.

#### October 19, 1918

On Friday of last week death came and ended the suffering of Henry Ringling, the youngest of the seven famous Ringling brothers. Although Henry for some years had been an equal owner in both the Barnum and Ringling show, for the past two years on account of illness, he spent but little time with either of the shows. In the death of Henry, this makes the fourth of the famous Ringlings who have passed over the divide. Gus, who was the oldest of the brothers, was the first to die something like 11 years ago; then the next was Otto, who was known as the financial man of the show, who looked after the finances; a little less than two years ago Al Ringling passed away shortly after completing one of the finest theaters of its size in his hometown at Baraboo, which will stand for years to come as a monument to his memory. Henry was always a quiet, reserved kind of man, always contented to allow the other man to do the talking. The last time Henry was in Janesville, "Delavan," the famous boss hostler was with the Ringling show. I went up to call on him and asked him who of the Ringling brothers were with the show and he said:

"Dave, nobody but silent Henry, and you could not have much of a visit with him." just then, Henry came up from behind us and hitting me on the back, asked me how I was getting along and if my health was good. He said. 'Dave, in less than an hour I have got to take a train for Baraboo. You and Delavan and I will go in and sit in the reserved seats and have a visit until my train leaves.' This we did, and for a wonder, Henry did most of the talking. When his chauffeur came in and told him that they had only 15 minutes to make their train, he then bid us good-bye. As he passed out of the tent, Delavan (who was always noted for saying something out of the ordinary) looked out from under his broad-brimmed hat and said: "Dave, Mr. Ringling will never live to get to Baraboo, for he has talked himself to death. In all the years that I have been with the show, I never have heard him talk as much as he has this evening." While Henry as a manager was exacting of his people, he was also kind and no one ever appreciated good help more than did Henry Ringling. For two years he was manager of the Forepaugh and Sells, and while he had but little to say, he managed the show in the same quiet manner that characterizes the man from his boyhood days.

Those of the brothers left who carried on the two great shows and perpetuated the name of "Ringling" are Alf T. and John Ringling of New York, and Charles of Evanston, Illinois.

The old Adam Forepaugh show back in the '80's did more or less business with the Ringling brothers and up to this day Charles Ringling tells with very much pride of the first visit and business relations that he had with Adam Forepaugh the first time that he met him.

It was just after an afternoon performance had commenced that smiling faced, boyish looking young man stopped at the main entrance and said: "This is Mr. Forepaugh, I believe. My name is Charles Ringling of the Ringling circus." Mr. Forepaugh was glad to know him and invited him to see the show. Mr. Ringling said: "I am here on a business mission, Mr. Forepaugh, and as



I have to leave for the show early this evening, I would like to talk business with you rather than to look at the show. While we have been doing a good business, our menagerie needs a little building up, and I thought I would come over and see you and see if you had anything in the way of extra animals or cages that we could buy." It was then that Adam Forepaugh warmed up and showed him everything he could spare out of his own show and gave him prices and in conclusion said: "Mr. Ringling, if this property looks cheap to you, I will ship them to you immediately and you can pay for them when you are ready." As the Ringlings had always heard of Adam Forepaugh as being kind of a rough and ready showman, it took the young man by surprise and he thanked Mr. Forepaugh saying: "We are not going to swim out so far that we can't get back, and we are going to pay cash for whatever we buy." But as they were young in the business at that time and not any too flush with ready cash, the Ringling brothers have always held a high regard for Adam Forepaugh's liberal offer to them while they were young in the business.

The epidemic which has spread all over the country in the last two or three weeks makes it necessary to close all the circuses as many towns which they have been billed in have been quarantined. Every tented aggregation that I can hear from has been obliged to go into winter quarters. At the close of the Ringling show at Waycross, Georgia, which was very unexpected to everyone with the show.

Charles Ringling went into the dressing rooms and made the following talk to the performers: He informed the performers that he was not in a position to do business with any of them for the next season at the present. He also informed them that the Ringling show would winter at Bridgeport, Connecticut with the Barnum & Bailey outfit and that there might be a consolidation of both shows as the Ringlings did not deem it practicable to have two shows on the road next year. If they were fortunate enough next season,

it would be a combined Ringling, Barnum & Bailey circus. Some performers from the Ringling show have already reached New York.

In speaking of Henry Ringling as a man of few words, it took me back a few years to the Showmen's League meeting which was held at the LaSalle Hotel in Chicago where my friends for the evening at dinner were Billie Pinkerton, the famous detective and head of the Pinkerton agency and James A. Brady, the theatrical manager. Both these men were anxious that I should entertain them telling circus stories and happenings in our business. This I did for a time and then I said: "My travels have been confined to the United States and both you men have traveled in every civilized country in the world. Without doubt, Mr. Pinkerton, you have more interesting stories buttoned up under your vest than any man that I know in the country, and yet you are satisfied to sit here and enjoy hearing me tell circus stories."

"Well, Dave," replied Mr. Pinkerton, "Arthur Wood Say and several other boys from our office have probably told you most of the interesting part of the work that has been done in our office for years back." Mr. Pinkerton then told us a detective story that was full of thrills. Mr. Pinkerton wanted to show how in those days when they got on a man's trail they would follow him day and night for thousands of miles and never stop until they had accomplished their end. I said to Mr. Pinkerton: "Possibly your business has something to do with your being a good listener and always insisting on the other fellow doing the talking." The great detective simply

smiled and said: "Dave, don't you think you're prying into our business quite a little?" I have often noticed that people all over the country whose characteristic it was to always listen and smile are the ones who are getting a store of knowledge, rather than those who are doing the talking.

Two companies of American Indians from Oklahoma, most of them belonging to the Osage, Choctaw and Creek tribes, took a valiant part in the capture of Machault by an American division operating under Gen. Guorand's orders. The Germans were strongly entrenched around the town and supported by a violent poison gas barrage, desperately opposed the American advance. The Americans assaulted several times but were checked.

William Pinkerton, the detective.



Reserve battalions including the Indian companies were brought up and ordered to charge. "When they went over the top, they simply went wild,"

said Mike Kelly, a doughboy from Houston, Texas. "They charged, yelling like regular blanket Indians and from the way the Boches acted, they were mighty scared at hearing that old redskin yell, which nobody had heard in war for many years. The Indians routed the Germans from firing pits and worked on them properly with bayonets and knives. Nightfall checked the battle. Taking advantage of the darkness, the Germans hastened away. Those Indian boys were delighted with the scrap. It was the first time they had been in battle but they did not belie their fighting reputation." This was probably the first redskin battle cry the Germans had heard since William Cody (Buffalo Bill) with his 200 redskin warriors, showed in Berlin for six weeks many years ago.



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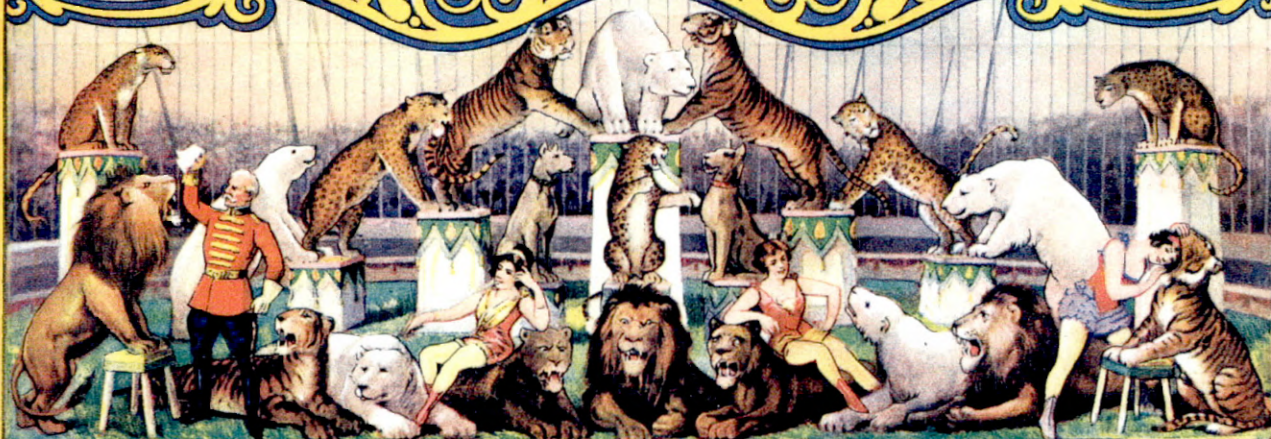
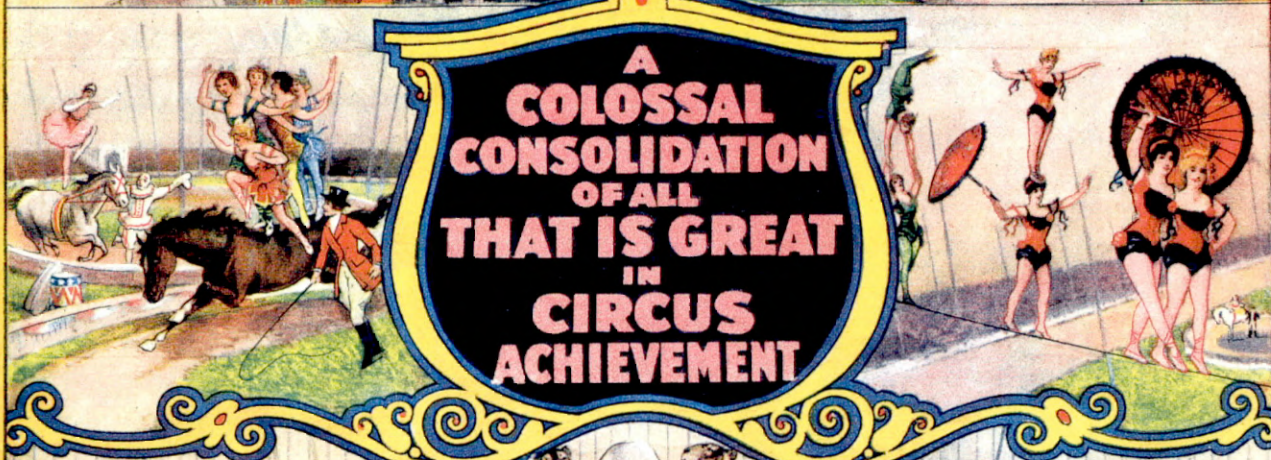
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